

# IOWA BIRD LIFE

IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION



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*The Iowa Ornithologists' Union, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. Iowa Bird Life and IOU News are quarterly publications of the Union.*

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**FRONT COVER:** Swallow-tailed Kite (third recent Iowa record) in Iowa City, Johnson Co., 4 June 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.

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# Meet an Iowa Birder — James Huntington

*James L. Fuller*



*James Huntington*

An illustration in a birding book by Sandy Komito (1990) pictures a lone birder on crutches slogging through the mud and snow on the main street in the Eskimo village of Wales, Alaska. He is accompanied by three of the village children who are “meeting an Iowa birder” in a situation that is classic James Huntington.

James Huntington of Iowa City has been a highly respected player on the national birding scene for a number of years. This has come about through his leadership roles at Alaskan outposts such as Attu and Gambell, his ABA area life list total that notches him near the top, and his reputation for not adding a bird to his life list unless he first gets a distinctive telescope view of it. An example of the latter is detailed in Mark Obmascik’s recent book (2004) where he explains that James’s name has become part of the birding vocabulary. Obmascik describes James as “an Iowa postman who was unique among top listers for three reasons: he was soft-spoken, humble, and

painfully careful with his field calls. He spent so much time staring at tricky birds that his name had become part of the birding vocabulary. A Huntington look was when somebody stared at a bird long after others left.”

James’s roots are in Michigan where he was born at Ann Arbor in 1948, and where his mother still makes her home. The son of Jay and Mary Huntington, he is the oldest of three children, with a sister, Elizabeth who lives in East Lansing, and a brother, Thomas, also in Michigan, who works at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. James attended Ann Arbor schools and then headed for Ypsilanti where he earned a B.S. in Biology and Chemistry at Eastern Michigan University. His early post education years were spent with assistant managerial duties at the Holiday Inn in Boulder, CO. Skiing on Colorado and Utah slopes was an attractive sideline to the job, but he continued to return to Michigan in the summers.

When James was offered a position at the Highlander Inn in Iowa City 25 years ago, he was a little reluctant to leave the mountains. In retrospect, however, he regards the move as a positive influence on his life and he continued at the motel for 20 years. In an effort to support his birding habit, he also took a position with the U.S. Post Office. And after 20 years, he is still delivering mail to the delight of townspeople to whom he is well known as the mailman of the birds. He doesn’t admit to toting his binoculars on the mail route, however.

His initial interest in the avian world goes back to the fall of 1973, when he clearly remembers his parents accompanying him on a trip to purchase binoculars and a bird guide, and subsequently using them to identify a thrush in his back yard. His birding interest grew while he was in Colorado, sparked by a field trip with the Denver Field Ornithologists to the Pawnee Grasslands. He recalls questioning Jim Lane about

Chestnut-collared Longspurs, and Jim's response was to consult his Lane Guide to see where to look. And they did see the longspurs on the outing. He expanded his birding activities to include Rocky Mountain National Park and Winter Park, both within easy drives of his home.

Soon after he found his way to Iowa City, he became locally active in the birding community and found great companionship with Iowa City birders, Jim Sandrock and John Cordell. Not long thereafter, the "chasing" bug hit him on a national level, and he started keeping local travel agents busy. The question between Iowa City birders at the time was (and still is), "Where is James off to now?" From Newfoundland to Southern California, Alaska to the Florida Keys, and all places in between, he was gone at the report of a rare bird. A few representative destinations included British Columbia for a Siberian Accentor, El Paso for a Cinnamon Hummingbird, Toronto for a Variegated Flycatcher, the Rio Grande Valley for a Ruddy Quail-Dove, or southeastern Arizona for a Blue Mockingbird or Aztec Thrush.

James also learned of the opportunities for seeing exotic birds at exotic locations in Alaska, particularly Attu, the most westerly of the Aleutian Islands, and the location in North America where Asian vagrants are most likely to occur. He subsequently signed on for a spring trip to Attu in 1987. But a late season skiing accident resulting in a fractured leg prevented participation that year. Undaunted, he made his way to Alaska anyway, and logged a great deal of territory on crutches with visits to Gambell, Nome, Wales, and Denali.

A year later James did complete his first of 14 excursions to Attu. The day prior to his departure for Alaska, he heard of a rare shorebird being seen near Lawrence, KS, hopped in his car, and arrived just in time to see a Spotted Redshank in the gathering dusk. And yes, he did make his plane to Anchorage the next day. That 1988 first year on Attu produced 24 life birds, as well as the motivation to return. He thereafter became a fixture on Attu each year, and was so well respected that he was asked to serve as a leader, which he did until tours there ended in 2000. During that last hurrah year, James discovered a Baillon's Crake, which was a potential first North American record. Every year on Attu is in itself a highlight, but the most notable, according to James, was 1989 when among other birds, Narcissus Flycatcher and Chinese Bittern were found.

It is not surprising that he lists Attu Island, Alaska as his favorite birding experience. In fact, this lonely island conjures a feeling of reverence in him. He describes it as "searching for birds never before seen, with you and your bicycle against the elements." James is a legend among Attu tour participants and staff. He appeared to be at ease with the birds and birders, the elements, the landscape, and his bicycle. Many of James's most admired birders and those most influential on his birding skills are Attuvians: Noble Proctor, Attu director Larry Balch, and Jerry Rosenband; Alaskans Thede Tobisch, Steve Heinl, and the late Pete Isleib; and Paul Baicich. Others he mentions are the late Louis Banker and Terry Savaloja.

Other areas of the country that rank high on his love-to-bird scale are southeastern Arizona and the Rio Grande Valley of south Texas.

The era of James's greatest birding activity was the early to mid-1990s when he kept the turnstiles at the Eastern Iowa Airport in perpetual motion. He notes that his travels have dropped off recently, which frees up more time and interest for birding around Iowa. Many of his field trips find him peddling his bicycle through the countryside around Iowa

City, and his list of “birds seen from a bicycle” must be the highest among state birders. The attraction to the bicycle may have first become a means of training for the strenuous activity on Attu, where travel is either by foot or by bike, much of which is over rough trails filled with potholes, mud, water, and snow.

A great birding storyteller, which just may be coincident with the fact that he makes a mean margarita, James has dozens of intriguing tales. One of the adventures he relates involves the week he spent with the Eared Trogons (now Eared Quetzal) in southeastern Arizona. Hiking into Carr and Ramsey Canyons with only his backpack with food, binoculars, and scope, he was able to contact and study the three trogons each day but one. A highlight was watching the male trogon catch a caterpillar and offer it to the female. This was also the occasion when he dropped his telescope and incurred the dent that still is a landmark of his scope, and when he also found the window of his rental car smashed upon his return to the trailhead.

He also tells of the trip to the wilderness area of inland Alaska, where a bush pilot landed him on the gravel bar of the Noatak River, so he could search for the rare Gray-headed Chickadee. An adventure at Sleeping Bear Dunes in Michigan produced the somewhat scary memory of a Northern Goshawk buzzing the top of his head.

A particularly vivid recollection for James was the day in October 1990 when he was notified that Tom Kent had found a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at the Hawkeye Wildlife Area, which at that time was a life bird for him. The only problem was that he was on duty at the motel for another three hours. After watching him pace behind the desk for some time, a sympathetic coworker encouraged his early departure, which as it turned out, was just in time to see the bird.

When tours to Attu concluded in 2000, James’s leadership abilities were sought by Wilderness Birding Adventures, and he has since been guiding birders to the Eskimo village of Gambell, which is on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea, scarcely 40 miles from Siberia. Like Attu, only farther north, this site produces a significant number of Asian strays. In fact, this past year’s trip located firsts for James of Common House-Martin and Long-billed Murrelet.

All of these years of intense birding activity have produced a phenomenal ABA area life list of 840 species, with several others “in the bank” awaiting the approval of records committees, which include very recent sightings of Black-headed Nightingale Thrush in Texas and Red-footed Falcon in Massachusetts. Despite this lengthy list, he still has his “most wanted” birds, which include Jabiru, Spoonbill Sandpiper, and Eurasian Curlew. And, indeed the list could be lengthier with the addition of ocean birds, were it not for mal de mer resulting in James’s understandable aversion to pelagic jaunts.

In Iowa, he singles out neighboring Hickory Hill Park in Iowa City, the Hawkeye Wildlife Area, and Cone Marsh in Louisa County as his favorite birding destinations. Among the rarities he has found locally, the most notable are a juvenile White Ibis at the Hawkeye Wildlife Area (Kent 1996) and a Black-throated Gray Warbler in Cedar County (Kent 1997).

As James has gotten more deeply into Iowa birding, he has shared his talents with local and state birders. He volunteers as a field trip leader for the Iowa City Bird Club, and most recently for the fall 2004 IOU meeting. He has mentored a number of novice birders. His daily warbler walks at Hickory Hill Park during May have been immensely popular in the community and have introduced many local birders to the sights and



sounds of Iowa in the spring. Another insight into what makes James Huntington tick is his own admission that he derives as much pleasure from helping another see a good bird, as he does from seeing one himself.

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## Field Reports — Summer 2004

*James J. Dinsmore*

#### WEATHER

June was cool and dry. Temperatures averaged 67.3 degrees, 2.5 degrees below average, and rainfall averaged 3.48 inches, 1.16 inches below average. It was the 27th coolest and 33rd driest June in 132 years of records. It was cool early in the month, warm from 5 through 16 June, and cool the rest of the month. No stations reported 90 degree readings after the 12th. The warmest days were 7 and 8 June with 95 degrees at Spencer on the 7th the month's high. The 25th was the coolest day with lows of 39 at Grinnell and Fayette, the lowest late June temperatures in Iowa since 1992. There was little rainfall through 9 June but statewide about 2.4 inches fell from 10–16 June. Almost 4 inches fell in Sac City and Rockwell City on the 16th. The rest of the month was dry. Most severe weather occurred on 11 June with 22 tornadoes; four more were reported on 16 June.

July was cool and somewhat wet. Temperatures averaged 70.7 degrees, 3.1 degrees below average and rainfall averaged 4.43 inches, 0.18 inches above average. It was the 11th coolest and 40th wettest July on record. It was cool throughout the month. The highest temperature was 95 at several stations on the 19th and 20th, matching the highs recorded in June. The low temperature was 43 at Osage on the 8th. It was Iowa's coolest July since 1992. Most rain fell early in the month with an average of 3.17 inches through 11 July.



*James J. Dinsmore*

#### HABITAT, GENERAL TRENDS

There is little to report that seemed abnormal relative to habitat conditions. The

heavy rain in May (see Kenne 2004) resulted in many flooded fields in early June, leading to numerous reports of shorebirds, herons, and other wetland birds away from their usual haunts. Those areas dried up rapidly and, by the end of June, little flooded field habitat remained. Most lakes, rivers, and marshes remained full, so in general there was little shorebird habitat until some late July rains provided some habitat for southbound birds.

Other habitats in Iowa seemed to be fairly normal for summer. There was little flooding of lowland timber and various grassland habitats likewise seemed to be fairly normal.

#### UNUSUAL SPECIES

This was the most interesting summer, bird wise, in several years with two Accidental species, Swallow-tailed Kite (see cover and p. 183) and White-winged Dove, reported. In addition, a well-documented Baird's Sparrow in Cherokee County adds a new species for Iowa. Other species that are unusual for summer that were reported include American Black Duck, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, a grebe trio (Eared, Red-necked, and Western), White-faced Ibis, Golden Eagle, Merlin, Black-necked Stilt, White-rumped Sandpiper, Le Conte's Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, and Pine Siskin

Among the nesting birds, two species, Pine Warbler and Clay-colored Sparrow, were added to the list of documented nesting species for Iowa. Other unusual species that might have been nesting but for which no documentation was gathered include Mississippi Kite, Short-eared Owl, Black-billed Magpie, and Black-and-white Warbler. Several nesting species that have been of conservation concern had fairly good years. Bald Eagle and Sandhill Crane nesting populations in Iowa continued to increase. Piping Plovers nested at both Council Bluffs and Sioux City, and the Least Tern colony at Council Bluffs was the largest it has been in several years. Iowa's only Ring-billed Gull colony was active, and several small colonies of Black Terns were located. Eurasian Collared-Doves continued to show up at new locations in the state. Surely within a few years they will have been reported from virtually all of Iowa (see Cecil 2004). Among reintroduced species, both Trumpeter Swans and Peregrine Falcons had fairly good years as they moved slowly toward reestablishment goals. Broods of both Sharp-tailed Grouse and Greater Prairie-Chickens were seen, indicating continued success for those small populations. Although several nesting attempts by Ospreys were reported, no nests were successful this summer versus two successful nests in 2003.

Among the more usual nesting species, it appeared that grassland species had a good year with Dickcissels seemingly everywhere and Upland Sandpipers, Henslow's Sparrows, and Bobolinks also having a good year. Likewise, I received numerous reports of some woodland species such as Wood Thrush, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Kentucky Warbler, and Scarlet Tanager as well as several species more typical of brushy or edge habitats such as Black-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-breasted Chat, and White-eyed Vireo. Much of this was due to the interest in the Important Bird Areas program. Amazingly, for some of these species, I received more reports than I received during the Breeding Bird Atlas project in the late 1980s.

Unlike last year, few spring migrants lingered into June but southbound shorebirds were back by late July. One of the mysteries of the summer involved American White Pelicans. The world's largest colony of that species, with about 14,000 pairs, mysteriously deserted its nesting site at Chase Lake in North Dakota early in summer. The whereabouts of those birds made the national news, and Iowans wondered if some of them

would show up here. Iowa seemed to have its usual groups of summering pelicans, especially in northern Iowa. However, the appearance of 2,300 pelicans in mid-July along the Mississippi River in northeastern Iowa was unprecedented and raises suspicions on the origin of those birds. One suspects that fewer juvenile pelicans should be seen in Iowa in the upcoming fall migration.

Along with all of the good news, a few areas of concern persisted. Only a single Swainson's Hawk was reported, no one reported evidence of nesting by Black-crowned Night-Herons or Forster's Terns, only a single Barn Owl nest was reported, and no King Rails or Bewick's Wrens were reported. Are these species slipping away with little notice?

## SPECIES DATA

All CAPS=Casual or Accidental species. \* =documented. County names are in italics. Full names of observers are listed at the end of article. Abbreviations used: A=area, L=lake, m. ob.=many observers, M=marsh, NA=nature area, NWR=national wildlife refuge, P=park, R=river, Res=reservoir, SF=state forest, Sl=slough, SP=state park, WPA=waterfowl production area, WA=wildlife area.

**Snow Goose:** As usual a few lingered into summer: 2 (1 white, 1 blue morph) on 6 Jun near Spencer *Clay* (KLP), 3 on 6 Jun at Errington M *Polk* (BE), and 2 (blue morph) on 23 Jul at Dunbar Sl *Greene* (JD).

**Trumpeter Swan:** The nesting population inched up from last year with 14 active nests, 8 of which were successful. Inopportune heavy rains flooded out several nests in northern Iowa (DHo). In 2003, 12 of 13 nests were successful.

**Gadwall:** From 1–9 were found in *Allamakee*, *Dickinson* (brood, LAS), *Emmet*, *Kossuth*, *Story*, *Polk*, and *Worth* (m. ob.). A brood on 18 Jul at Errington M *Polk* (DT) was unusually far south, and an adult on 10 Jul at Lakin Sl *Guthrie* (CJC) was the only report from south of I-80.

**American Wigeon:** One on 6, 12 Jun at Union Slough NWR *Kossuth* (MCK) was the only report.

**American Black Duck:** A male on 4 Jun at New Albin *Allamakee* (DeC) is the first summer report since 2002.

**Northern Shoveler:** From 1–3 were found in *Allamakee*, *Dickinson*, *Polk*, *Story*, and *Winneshiek* (DeC, SSP, BE, HZ). The only evidence of breeding was 2 broods at Colo Ponds *Story* (HZ) and a nest at Chichaqua WA *Polk* (DT).

**Northern Pintail:** All: 1 on 20 Jun at Grover's L *Dickinson* (LAS) and 2 on 27 Jun at Errington M *Polk* (BE).

**Green-winged Teal:** Two on 27 Jun at Errington M (BE) and a brood at Colo Ponds *Story* (HZ) were the only reports.

**Canvasback:** All: 1 on 10 Jun at Ingham L *Emmet* (SSP, KLP) and 3 adults and a brood on 3, 5 Jul at Eagle L *Hancock* (MPR, PH, AB).

**Redhead:** In northern Iowa, 1–8 were in *Clay*, *Dickinson*, *Hancock*, *Kossuth*, and *Osceola* (brood, AB) (SSP, KLP, LAS, CJE, MCK, AB). In central Iowa, 2 lingered until 21 Jun at Colo Ponds (HZ).

**Ring-necked Duck:** All: a pair on 2 Jun at Welch Lake WPA *Dickinson* (JD) and 1 on 24 Jul at Cheever L *Emmet* (LAS).

**Lesser Scaup:** All: Singles on 20 Jun at Elk Lake WPA *Clay* (LAS) and 27 Jun at Union Slough NWR (MCK).



**Bufflehead:** A male on 6 Jun at Littlefield P Audubon (RIA, PHA) is the first summer report since 2001.

**Hooded Merganser:** Reported in *Butler* (brood, DK), *Clay* (brood, SSP, KLP, LAS), *Clayton* (brood, DAK), *Dallas* (brood, BE), *Jackson*, *Kossuth* (broods, LAS), *Louisa*, *Polk* (brood, BE), *Story*, *Tama*, and *Winneshiek* (brood, DK).

**Common Merganser:** All: 1 from 17 Jun–24 Jul at Port Neal Woodbury (BFH) and 1 on 19 Jun at Twelve Mile L *Emmet* (LAS).

**Ruddy Duck:** As in 2003, Ruddy Ducks seemed to be everywhere with peak counts of 40 on 6 Jun at Union Slough NWR (MCK) and 30 throughout the period at Colo Ponds (HZ). Other reports came from *Cerro Gordo*, *Clay* (brood, AB), *Emmet* (brood, LAS), *Fremont*, *Hancock* (brood, PH, AB), *Osceola* (brood, AB), *Polk* (brood, AB), *Winnebago*, *Winneshiek*, *Worth*, and *Wright* (m. ob.).

**Gray Partridge:** All reports were from north of I-80 in *Allamakee*, *Cerro Gordo*, *Clay*, *Clayton*, *Dickinson*, *Hancock*, *Kossuth*, *Marshall*, *Osceola*, *Polk*, *Story* (broods, LDA, HZ), and *Webster*. Singles in late July in *Allamakee* and *Clayton* (DAK) were in NE Iowa where this species historically has been uncommon.

**Ruffed Grouse:** A brood near Decorah on 3 Jun (DeC) is the first brood reported to me in more than 20 years. In NE Iowa, Koenig noted singles in *Allamakee* and *Winneshiek* while 1 on 1 Jun at Stephens SF *Monroe* (AB) was the only report from southern Iowa.

**Sharp-tailed Grouse:** In spring, 6 birds were attending 4 leks in central Woodbury. This summer, 3 broods were found in the area, indicating continued reproduction by this small population (EW).

**Greater Prairie-Chicken:** Five broods were noted: 2 (one with 10 young) in June on private land in *Ringgold* and 3 more on 10 Jul on the Kellerton WA *Ringgold* (Mel Moe fide BEh).

**Northern Bobwhite:** From 1–4 were found in *Harrison*, *Plymouth*, and *Woodbury* in the west (GLV, CJC, BFH) and *Johnson*, *Muscatine*, and *Scott* in the east (MCD, JLF, DGR).

**Common Loon:** All: 1 basic adult on 20 Jun, 17, 18 Jul (LAS, AB) and 2 basic adults on 24 Jul at Spirit L *Dickinson* (LAS).

**Pied-billed Grebe:** Other than 1 on 10 Jun at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* (MOR) and several broods at Errington M and Chichaqua WA *Polk* (BE, DT), all reports were from north of highway 30 and included reports of breeding at Eagle L *Hancock* (PH, MPr) and Colo Ponds *Story* (HZ).

**Red-necked Grebe:** All: 2 from 1 Jun–5 Jul at Eagle L *Hancock* (RGo, PH, CJE, MPr, AB), 1 on 12 Jun at Union Slough NWR (MCK), a pair on 9, 10 Jun at Cheever L *Emmet* (SSP, KLP), and 2 on 5 Jul at East Twin L *Hancock* (AB).

**Eared Grebe:** All: 2 from 3–10 Jun at Colo Ponds *Story* (HZ, JJD, MCD).

**Western Grebe:** All: 1 on 1 Jun at Ventura M *Cerro Gordo* (RGo, PH), and 1 adult on 5, 8 Jul at East Twin L *Hancock* (AB, SSP).

**American White Pelican:** A few probably summered such as 24 on 11 Jun at Ventura M (RGo), 12 on 19 Jun at Green Island WA *Jackson* (MCD), 444 on 20 Jun at Marble L *Dickinson* (LAS), and 200 on 26 Jun at Otter Creek M *Tama* (BSc, MCD). By mid-July, southbound birds were evident including 2,300 on 14 Jul at Pool 9 *Allamakee* (DAK), 300 on 19 Jul at Union Slough NWR (MCK), and 2,500 on 30 Jul at Coralville Res *Johnson* (MCD).

**Double-crested Cormorant:** Most: 87 on 14 Jul at Pool 9 *Allamakee* (DAK), 36 on 4 Jul at Union Slough NWR (MCK), and 28 on 15 Jul at Pool 10 *Clayton* (DAK). From 1–8 were found on numerous other wetlands around the state. The only nesting activity reported was 38 nests at Coralville Res (MCD).

**American Bittern:** All: Up to 6 on 16 Jul at Errington M *Polk* (RT, BE, AB, DT) and 2 on 3 Jul at Eagle L *Hancock* (PH, MPr). A brood near Ames (M. Meetz fide JJD) is the first for central Iowa in some years.

**Least Bittern:** As in 2003, I received numerous reports of this secretive species. From 1–6 were found in *Allamakee*, *Emmet*, *Fremont*, *Guthrie*, *Hancock*, *Jackson*, *Johnson*, *Palo Alto*, *Pocahontas*, *Warren*, and *Winneshiek* (m. ob.).

**Great Blue Heron:** Several colonies were noted including those at Big Creek L *Polk* (BE) and Jensen M *Madison* (RT).

**Great Egret:** From 1–10 were found on numerous wetlands during June. The only large post-breeding concentration was 190 on 28 Jul at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (RD).

**Cattle Egret:** Most: 24 on 19 Jun at Moeckley Prairie *Polk* (BE) and 8 on 1 Jun at Zirbel Sl *Cerro Gordo* (RGo). Elsewhere, 1–3 were seen in *Cerro Gordo*, *Hancock*, *Story*, *Tama*, and *Wright* (RGo, PH, JJD, HZ, AB, MPr). The last report was on 7 July.

**Green Heron:** From 1–6 were found on numerous wetlands scattered across Iowa.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** From 1–3 were found in *Cerro Gordo*, *Hancock*, *Kossuth*, *Polk*, *Warren*, and *Woodbury* (JB, PH, MPr, AB, RGo, MCK, DK, BFH). Most were single birds, and none of the reports suggest nesting. Has this species disappeared as a nesting species in Iowa?

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** All: A first-summer bird on 6, 8 Jun at Moeckley Prairie *Polk* (BE, RIA, PHA, DT) and 2 adults on 13 Jul at Rathbun WA *Wayne* (AB).

**White-faced Ibis:** One made a brief appearance on 9 Jun at Colo Ponds *Story* (HZ, JJD-details, 3rd latest).

**Osprey:** Osprey nesting attempts at L Macbride *Johnson* (2 attempts), Red Rock Res *Marion*, and Spirit L were all unsuccessful. Pairs at Don Williams L *Boone* and Saylorville Res were working on nests at the end of the period, almost certainly too late for this year. The introduction program continued with 23 hacked young released or close to release at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (5 yg), Don Williams L (4 yg), Hartman Reserve *Black Hawk* (4 yg), Saylorville Res (5 yg), and Wickiup Hill *Linn* (5 yg) (PS).

**SWALLOW-TAILED KITE:** One on 3–5 Jun just north of Iowa City (\*JSc, \*JLE, \*CE, \*AB, \*MCD, m. ob.) was the first since 2000 and only the third recent record for Iowa (see cover and p. 183).

**Mississippi Kite:** All: 3 on 20, 22 Jun (JGi, AB) and 2 on 10 Jul (MPr) were all on the south side of Des Moines near where kites nested in 2003.

**Bald Eagle:** Eagles continue to increase with 27 new nests reported this year and a conservative estimate of 175 active nests in Iowa (BEh). Three counties (*Adams*, *Henry*, *Poweshiek*) had their first nests this year raising the total to at least 67 counties that have had eagle nests in modern times.

**Northern Harrier:** Singles on 10 Jun *Clay* (SSP, KLP), 12 Jun at Diamond Lake WA *Dickinson* (SSP), 15 Jun near Britt *Hancock* (JJD), 19 Jun *Wayne* (AMJ), 19 Jun at Dugout Creek WA *Dickinson* (LAS), 2 on 23 Jun at Kellerton WA *Ringgold* (MPr), and 2 from 26 Jun to 14 Jul *Wayne* (AB). All could have been breeding. No one provided evidence of a nest or brood.

**Cooper's Hawk:** Birds were noted in 16 counties spanning most of the state. Nests were seen at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* (CJF, RGo, PH), Jemmerston Sl *Dickinson* (SSP), Lake Ahquabi SP *Warren* (JGi), and Bacon Creek P *Woodbury* (BFH, GLV).

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** All: Singles in *Allamakee*, *Black Hawk*, and *Clayton* (DK, JD, DAK). One on 3 Jun at Saylorville Res *Polk* (MPr) was away from where it is expected in summer.

**Broad-winged Hawk:** Birds were found in 16 counties across much of Iowa. The only evidence of breeding was a nest at Lake Ahquabi SP *Warren* (AB) and a recently fledged young at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* (MOr).

**Swainson's Hawk:** One on 18 Jul near Spencer *Clay* (AB) was the only report. This species has become very rare in summer in Iowa.

**Golden Eagle:** One found entangled in a fence in late June near Smithland *Woodbury* (KK-photo) is the second summer record for this species.

**Merlin:** A female (*F. c. columbarius* or taiga race) on 11 Jul at Algona *Kossuth* gave Kenne a leisurely view (MCK-details). Merlins have nested in several states to our north and west and might do so in Iowa as well.

**Peregrine Falcon:** It was a good year with 9 occupied territories. Pairs in Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Des Moines, and *Louisa* fledged a total of 13 young although several died soon thereafter. Three other pairs occupied territories (Des Moines, Burlington, *Wapello*) but didn't lay eggs. Most disappointingly, pairs that occupied natural cliff nest sites in *Allamakee* both produced eggs but fledged no young (PS).

**Virginia Rail:** Besides 8 on 9 Jun at Eagle L *Hancock* (RGo), 1 or 2 were found on wetlands in *Guthrie*, *Hancock*, *Jhnson*, *Kossuth*, *Palo Alto*, *Pocahontas*, *Polk*, *Winnebago*, and *Worth*. One on 12 Jun at Long Pond *Guthrie* (JGi) was the only report south of I-80.

**Sora:** Up to 7 were seen in *Clay*, *Guthrie*, *Hancock*, and *Winneshiek* (SSP, KLP, JGi, RGo, DeC, DAK), all at sites where this secretive species is expected.

**Common Moorhen:** From 1-4 were found in *Clinton*, *Guthrie*, *Hancock*, *Jackson*, *Story*, *Warren*, and *Winneshiek* (m. ob.), the most reports in several years. Broods were noted at Eagle L *Hancock* (MPr, PH) and Colo Ponds *Story* (Wolf Oesterreich fide JD).

**American Coot:** This seemed to be a good year for coots with broods noted at Colo Ponds *Story* (HZ) and Errington M *Polk* (BE, DK), both at the southern edge of its Iowa breeding range.

**Sandhill Crane:** Cranes are gradually expanding their range in Iowa. A conservative estimate was about 16 pairs and 66 individuals (PS).

**Black-bellied Plover:** All: 1 on 3 Jun at Errington M *Polk* (RT).

**American Golden-Plover:** All: 1 on 1 Jun in *Hancock* (RGo, PH) and 2 on 20 Jun near Bancroft *Kossuth* (MCK).

**Semipalmated Plover:** First: 1 on 18 Jul at Hawkeye WA *Jhnson* (DP). Most: 6 on 29 Jul at Ada Hayden P in Ames (JD).

**Piping Plover:** At the MidAmerican Ponds *Pottawattamie* on 10 Jul, 10-12 plovers were seen including 3 or 4 chicks (BSc). At Port Neal *Woodbury*, on 17 Jun, 6 adults and 9 fledglings were present and on 25 Jun, 8 adults were seen (BFH). Elsewhere, singles were found on 29 Jul at Ada Hayden P in Ames (SSP, KLP) and on 30, 31 Jul at Hawkeye WA (MCD, KN, DP, RIA, PHA).

**Killdeer:** The most was 131 on 5 Jul at Saylorville Res (DK).

**Black-necked Stilt:** All: 1 on 5-10 Jun at Colo Ponds *Story* (HZ, JJD-details, MPr-details, MCD) was unexpected.

**Greater Yellowlegs:** Last: 1 on 4 Jun at Colo Ponds *Story* (JLF). First: 1 on 22 Jul at Big M *Butler* (MCK). Most: 11 on 29 Jul at Ada Hayden P in Ames (SSP, KLP).

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** One on 17 Jun at Colo Ponds *Story* and 2 there on 27 Jun (HZ, MPr, BPr) may have been summering. Two on 30 Jun at Cardinal M *Winneshiek* (DK) seem to the first southbound birds, and 210 on 28 Jul near Sexton *Kossuth* (MCK) were by far the most.

**Solitary Sandpiper:** First: 2 on 11 Jul near Bancroft *Kossuth* (MCK). Most: 9 on 25 Jul at Polk City WA *Polk* (BE).

**Willet:** One on 11 Jul in SE *Boone* (MPr, BPr) was the only report.

**Spotted Sandpiper:** Reports from *Allamakee*, *Clayton*, *Ida*, *Johnson* (brood, JSc), *Louisa*, *Polk*, *Story*, and *Winneshiek* (m. ob.) were all probably of breeding birds.

**Upland Sandpiper:** Reports from 22 counties encompassed most of the state except the NE corner (m. ob.). This species continues to be uncommon but present, even in heavily farmed regions; e.g., 6 on a Breeding Bird Survey route in intensively farmed *Kossuth* and *Hancock* (JJD).

**Marbled Godwit:** One on 26-27 Jun at Colo Ponds *Story* (HZ, MPr-details) was the only report.

**Sanderling:** All: 16 on 1 Jun at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH, RGo).

**Semipalmated Sandpiper:** One on 25 Jun at Port Neal *Woodbury* (BFH) defies definition. Three on 12 Jul at Colo Ponds *Story* (HZ) were the first southbound birds and 15 on 29 Jul at Ada Hayden P in Ames were the most (SSP, KLP).

**Least Sandpiper:** One on 16 Jun at Colo Ponds (HZ) and 2 on 24 Jun at MidAmerican Energy Ponds *Pottawattamie* (MPr) defy easy definition. The first southbound was 1 on 4 Jul near Maynard Reece WA *Kossuth* (MCK), and 54 on 25 Jul at Polk City WA *Polk* (BE) were the most.

**White-rumped Sandpiper:** Last: 11 on 20 Jun at Dewey's Pasture *Clay* (LAS) and 2 on 25 Jun at Port Neal *Woodbury* (BFH) were unusually late. One on 29 Jul at Ada Hayden P in Ames (SSP/KLP-details) was early.

**Baird's Sandpiper:** Last: 1 on 6 Jun at Welch L WPA *Dickinson* (LAS) was very late. Singles on 16 Jul at Kindlespire P *Clay* (LAS), 20 Jul in *Clay* (AB) and 22 Jul at Big M *Butler* (MCK) were the only southbound birds.

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** Singles on 17 Jun at Colo Ponds *Story* (HZ), 20 Jun at Dewey's Pasture *Clay* (LAS), and 27 Jun at Errington M *Polk* (BE) were either late spring stragglers or summering birds. One on 5 Jul at Muskrat Sl *Jones* (BSc) was the first southbound bird and 160 on 28 Jul near Sexton *Kossuth* (MCK) were the most.

**Dunlin:** All: 9 on 6 Jun at Long Pond *Guthrie* (RIA, PHA) and 1 on 17 Jun at Port Neal *Woodbury* (BFH, record latest).

**Stilt Sandpiper:** First: 1 on 18 Jul at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (DP). Most: 17 on 29 Jul at Ada Hayden P in Ames (SSP, KLP).

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** First: 4 on 28 Jul at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CJC, RD).

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** First: 1 on 5 Jul at Muskrat Sl *Jones* (BSc).

**Wilson's Snipe:** All: 1 on 5 Jun at Colo Ponds *Story* (JJD) was south of where this species usually is expected to nest whereas 1 on 6 Jun at Maynard Reece WA *Kossuth* (MCK) was at the edge of its expected nesting range.



**American Woodcock:** All: 1 still displaying on 1 Jun at Fin-Feather L *Cerro Gordo* (RGo, PH) and 2 on 1 Jul at Brown's L *Woodbury* (BFH). Erratum for *Iowa Bird Life* 74(3):99: woodcock nest at Rolling Thunder Prairie was in Warren, not *Woodbury*.

**Wilson's Phalarope:** A juvenile on 18 Jul at Colo Ponds *Story* (HZ) where a male was seen on 9, 10 Jun (JD, HZ) was suggestive of local nesting. One on 25 Jul at Polk City WA *Polk* (BE) and 3 on 28 Jul near Sexton *Kossuth* (MCK) were the only migrants noted.

**Franklin's Gull:** 400 at Ventura M *Cerro Gordo* (MCK) and 250 w of Spirit L *Dickinson* (JD), both on 2 Jun, were probably late migrants. At least some of the 237 at Spirit L (LAS) and 8 at Polk City WA *Polk* on 19 Jun (BE), 10 on 24 Jun at MidAmerican Energy Ponds *Pottawattamie* (MPr), and 22 at Mason City *Cerro Gordo* and 46 in *Emmet* on 27 Jun (PH) probably summered. Southbound birds arrived in mid-July with 800 on 16 Jul at the landfill near E Okoboji L *Dickinson* (LAS).

**Ring-billed Gull:** On 2 Jun at least 175 adults were at Meinking M *Dickinson*. Two well feathered juveniles were visible on an island there where they have nested previously, and several other adults appeared to be nesting (JD). A few Ring-bills were found scattered across the state from mid-June to mid-July. An amazing 4,500 were found on 14 Jul on Pool 9 of the Mississippi R *Allamakee* (DAk), the largest summer concentration on record. Perhaps a nesting colony to the north failed, causing these birds to move south earlier than usual.

**Herring Gull:** All: 2 on 6 Jun at Pool 13 in Clinton *Clinton* (PVN), 1 third-winter bird on 12 Jul at Guttenberg *Clayton* (DAk) and 4 adults on 15 Jul at Dubuque (DAk).

**Caspian Tern:** One or 2 were found scattered across Iowa from early June to mid-July. The most was 7 on 17 Jun at Port Neal *Woodbury* (BFH) and 7 on 24 Jun at MidAmerican Energy Ponds *Pottawattamie* (MPr).

**Common Tern:** All: 4 on 1 Jun on Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH-details, RGo).

**Forster's Tern:** As many as 10 were found during June and early July in *Bremer*, *Cerro Gordo*, *Hancock*, *Pottawattamie*, *Woodbury*, and *Worth* (m. ob.) but no one reported evidence of nesting. Reports after mid-July from *Dickinson*, *Harrison*, *Kossuth*, *Pottawattamie*, and *Woodbury* (m. ob.) were probably southbound migrants with 20 on 30 Jul at Spirit L (PH) the most.

**Least Tern:** At Port Neal *Woodbury* on 17 Jun and 24 Jul, 12 adults but no young were seen (BFH). At MidAmerican Energy Ponds *Pottawattamie* on 20 Jun, 26 adults and 5 young (in 3 nests) were seen, the most in several years. A number of the adults were sitting on additional nests, presumably with eggs or small young (AB). The only migrant reported away from the Missouri R was 1 on 22 Jul at Ada Hayden P in Ames (KJH).

**Black Tern:** Terns were found in all but extreme southern Iowa throughout June; at least some of those in early June undoubtedly were late migrants. The most reported was 50 on 3 Jul at Eagle L *Hancock* (PH, MPr). On 4 Jul Brees found eggs and/or young at Harmon Lake WA and Thorpe P *Winnebago*, and Eagle L *Hancock*. By mid-July, migrants were evident, mainly in the northern half of the state (e.g., 30 on 24 Jul at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury*, GLV and 22 on 29 Jul at Cardinal M *Winneshiekie*, DAk).



**Eurasian Collared-Dove:** This species continues to consolidate its range in Iowa. Reports of 1 on 13 Jun at Traer *Tama* (CE), 1 on 13 Jun at Marengo *Iowa* (CE), 2 on 25 Jun in Stanton *Montgomery* (AB), 3 on 12 Jul in Randall *Hamilton* (AB, AMJ), and 1 on 22 Jul near Coulter *Franklin* (MCK) all seem to be new county records. From 1 to 5 birds were found in Carroll *Carroll*, Ventura *Cerro Gordo*, Hamburg *Fremont*, Fairfield *Jefferson*, Algona *Kossuth*, Pleasantville *Marion*, Albia *Monroe*, Des Moines *Polk*, Milo *Warren*, and Allerton and Corydon *Wayne*, all counties with previous records.

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE:** One found on 28 Jun in Ottesen *Humboldt* (\*Jacob Newton) was seen the next day (Eloise/Eugene Armstrong-details fide JJD) but not after that. One made a brief appearance on 29 Jun at the Proescholdt yard in Liscomb *Marshall* (\*MPR, BPR).

**Black-billed Cuckoo:** From 1–3 were reported in 18 counties covering all except NW Iowa (m. ob.). This is the most reported in recent years.

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** Reported from at least 20 counties statewide (m. ob.), this species seems much more common than the previous one.

**Barn Owl:** A nest at Otter Creek M *Tama* apparently fledged at least a few young, the only known successful nest this year (BEh).

**Short-eared Owl:** One seen in late Jun and again on 22 Jul on a private grassland west of Bancroft *Kossuth* (RH<sub>a</sub>) was the only report.

**Chuck-will's-widow:** Up to 2 were heard at the usual listening (listing?) stop near Waubonsie SP *Fremont* (AB, MPR, MCD, BSc, RIA, PHA).

**Whip-poor-will:** Besides reports from usual sites in *Cherokee*, *Fremont*, and *Linn* (AB, MCD, BSc), 1 on 1 Jun along the Winnebago R Worth (PH, RGo) seemed to be at a new site.

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** Few comments but apparently still fairly common; the most was 22 at the feeders at Pikes Peak SP *Clayton* (DAK).

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** Only Hertzell mentioned any concern about this species, which is still widespread in Iowa.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Most reports came from the three northeastern-most counties where Koenig found 20 during the summer. Elsewhere, reports included 2 on 6 Jun at Bacon Creek P *Woodbury* (GLV), 2 on 8 Jun at Martin Access *Cherokee* (AB), 1 on 9 Jun at A.A. Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK), and 3 on 22 Jun in Spencer *Clay* (LAS).

**Pileated Woodpecker:** Reported from *Allamakee*, *Black Hawk*, *Clayton*, *Fayette*, *Lee*, *Lucas*, *Monroe*, and *Polk* (m. ob.) where it is expected. The only report from west of I-35 was 1 on 10 Jun at Dolliver SP *Webster* (AB), filling in a gap between the upper and lower reaches of the Des Moines R where it has become established in recent years.

**Olive-sided Flycatcher:** Last: 1 on 4 Jun at Sweet M *Bremer* (DWM).

**Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** One on 2 Jun at Grammer Grove WA *Marshall* (MPR) was the only lingering migrant.

**Acadian Flycatcher:** From 1–12 were reported in 18 counties (m. ob.). Only the reports from near Ledges SP *Boone* (KJ), Pilot Knot SP in *Hancock/Winnebago* (RGo, CJF), and Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* (MOR) were west of I-35.

**Alder Flycatcher:** Last: 2 on 3 Jun at Algona *Kossuth* (MCK), 1 on 6 Jun near Elkader *Clayton* (DAK), and 1 on 12 Jun at Spring Run WA *Dickinson* (KLP).

**Willow Flycatcher:** I received reports from 16 counties (m. ob.), all from north of I-80 except for 1 on 3 Jun at Banner WA *Warren* (MPR) and 1 on 10 Jul at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* (MOR).

**Least Flycatcher:** One on 3 Jun at Algona *Kossuth* (MCK), 2 on 9, 10 Jun at Cheever L *Emmet* (SSP, KLP), and 1 on 20 Jul at Rush L *Palo Alto* (AB) were probably late/early migrants. Singles on 6 Jun at Marquette *Clayton* (DAK), on 15 Jun, 2 Jul at Elk Creek M *Worth* (JJD, CJF), 15 Jun at Eagle L *Hancock* (CJF), and 2 on 6 Jun at Guttentberg *Clayton* (DAK) all hint of local breeding.

**Western Kingbird:** Away from the western border where this species is expected, all reports were from *Polk* where several pairs were present at the State Capitol (MPR, JGi, BE, JJD) and a brood was at Terra L in Johnston on 10 Jul (DT). In *Pottawattamie* on 10 Jul, 27 were at Hitchcock NA and 13 at MidAmerican Energy Ponds (MOR).

**Loggerhead Shrike:** Reported from 13 counties, mostly from south of highway 30 (m. ob.).

**White-eyed Vireo:** One or 2 were found in *Des Moines*, *Johnson*, *Lee*, *Lucas*, *Polk*, and *Warren* (AB, CE, MCD, CJC, RIA, PHA, AMJ, DK, RT), more reports than most recent years.

**Bell's Vireo:** With 48 reports, one of the most reported species. It was found in 24 counties that covered all except the NE corner of Iowa (m. ob.).

**Yellow-throated Vireo:** This species continues to be fairly common in all but NW Iowa.

**BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE:** A few were seen in June at Broken Kettle Grasslands *Plymouth* (Scott Moats fide JJD), the site of most recent reports.

**Purple Martin:** I received reports of colonies from throughout Iowa with strongholds seeming to be along the Mississippi R (e.g., 80 on 10 Jul at Lansing *Allamakee*, DAK) and near some of Iowa's larger lakes (e.g., 100 on 1 Jun at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* [PH]). I believe that this species is less common now than a decade or two ago but material in this report is not detailed enough to document any change. Anyone interested in a project?

**Tufted Titmouse:** One on 8 Jul at Rutland *Humboldt* (SSP) must be near its northern range limit along the Des Moines R.

**Brown Creeper:** One on 26 Jun at Klum L *Louisa* (CE) was the only report.

**Carolina Wren:** One or 2 were found in *Cerro Gordo*, *Fremont*, *Johnson*, *Lee*, *Lucas*, *Marshall*, *Pottawattamie*, *Story* (nest, KL), *Warren*, and *Winnesiek* (m. ob.), about typical of recent years.

**Sedge Wren:** Sedge Wrens seemed to be fairly common in suitable grassland habitat; e.g., 80 were found on 2 Jun at Hanlontown Sl *Worth* (SSP).

**Marsh Wren:** Outside of the Des Moines Lobe where it is expected, as many as 17 were found at Bakewell's Pond and Pool Sl *Allamakee* (DAK), Goose L *Clinton* (PVN), L Macbride and Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CE, DP), Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* (MOR), Otter Creek M *Tama* (CE), and Brown's L *Woodbury* (BFH).

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** One on 5 Jun at Wanata SP *Clay* (SSP, KLP) and 3 on 19 Jul at A.A. Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK) were at the edge of its usual Iowa range.

**Veery:** One or 2 were found at Brush Creek Canyon *Fayette* (DK), Pilot Knot SP *Hancock/Winnebago* (RGo, CJF), Beam Woods *Jones* (CE), Stephens SF *Lucas* (AJ), Grammar Grove WA *Marshall* (MPR), and Chichaqua WA *Polk* (DK), more than most recent summers.

**Swainson's Thrush:** One on 2 Jun at Liscomb *Marshall* (MPr, BPr) was the only report.

**Wood Thrush:** With 49 reports, the most reported species. It was reported from 25 counties (m. ob.), even reaching remote Gitchie Manitou State Preserve *Lyon* with 1 or 2 singing there on 26 Jun, 2 Jul (RIA, PHA, SSP, KLP). A nest in *Boone* (LDa) was a rare find.

**Northern Mockingbird:** From 1–3 were found in *Iowa, Louisa, Madison, Polk, Pottawattamie, and Wayne* (brood, AB) (DP, DAK, MCD, MPr, JLF, CJC, AMJ, DK, DT, MOR, AB).

**Cedar Waxwing:** Traveling birders Brees, Koenig, and the Pattersons all commented on the abundance of waxwings this summer.

**Blue-winged Warbler:** From 1–5 were found in *Clayton, Clinton, Henry, Lee, and Winneshiek* (DAK, PVN, AB, CE, DeC).

**Tennessee Warbler:** Last: 1 on 3 Jun at *Algona Kossuth* (MCK) and 1 on 5 Jun at *Wanata SP Clay* (SSP, KLP). One on 2 Jul at *Pilot Knob SP Hancock* (RGo) is a puzzling date.

**Northern Parula:** From 1–4 were found in 10 counties. Other than 1 on 24 Jun at *Waubonsie SP Fremont* (MPr) and 1 on 21 Jul at *De Soto NWR Harrison* (LJP, BKP), all reports were in SE Iowa or near the Des Moines R north to Boone.

**Chestnut-sided Warbler:** All: singles on 1 Jun at *Eagle L Hancock* (PH) and at *A.A. Call SP Kossuth* (RGo) were probably late migrants. Two on 16 Jun at *Coon Creek WA Winneshiek* (DK) and 3 (1 carrying food) on 17 Jun at *Yellow River SF* (DK) were probably nesting.

**Magnolia Warbler:** All: 2 on 13 Jun at *Iowa City* (JBB) were late.

**Yellow-throated Warbler:** From 1–4 were found in *Allamakee, Boone, Clayton, Des Moines, Johnson, Lee, Louisa, Van Buren, and Warren* (m. ob.), all in eastern Iowa or along the Des Moines R valley where this species is regular. The only evidence of breeding was a brood on 30 Jun at *Welter P Des Moines* (AB).

**Pine Warbler:** A family group including an adult male and 4 juveniles was found on 5 Jul at the *Donnellson Unit* of *Shimek SF Lee* and was seen through 12 Jul (\*RD, \*MCD, \*CE, m. ob.). This is the first report of nesting for this species in Iowa and the first summer season report.

**Cerulean Warbler:** From 1–10 were found in *Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Fremont, Lee, Louisa, Muscatine, Van Buren, and Washington* (m. ob.). Birds at *Pilot Knob SP Hancock/Winnebago* (RGo, CJE, GLV) were at the edge of its usual range.

**Black-and-white Warbler:** All: A singing male on 1 Jun at *Stephens SF Monroe* (AB), a female on 3 Jun at *Lake Ahquabi SP Warren* (MPr), and 1 on 26 Jun at *Klum L Louisa* (CE) were all suggestive of breeding birds.

**American Redstart:** Widely reported with most reports from east of I-35. Koenig found 45 in *Allamakee* and 60 in *Clayton* during the period, an indication of how common this species is in suitable habitat.

**Prothonotary Warbler:** From 1–7 were found in *Allamakee, Clayton, Davis, Jackson, Lee, Louisa, Lucas, and Van Buren* where it is expected (m. ob.). Singles on 6 Jun at *Algona Kossuth* (MCK) and 13 Jun at *George Wyth SP Black Hawk* (CE) were somewhat outside its usual range.

**Worm-eating Warbler:** All: Singles on 2 Jun, 2 Jul at *Shimek S.F., Croton Unit Lee* (AB), 5 Jun at *Brinton Timber Washington* (CE, CJC), and 27 Jun at *Shimek SF Farmington Unit Lee* (CE).

**Ovenbird:** Reported from 15 counties encompassing much of Iowa (m. ob.).

**Louisiana Waterthrush:** From 1–4 were found in *Boone, Fremont, Henry, Lee, Monroe,* and *Van Buren* (m. ob.). Birds at Hacklebarney Woods *Montgomery* (AB), Fox Hills WA *Wapello* (AB), Pammel SP *Madison* (AB), and Stoney Hollow Rd *Des Moines* (AB) all seemed to be at new sites for this species.

**Kentucky Warbler:** I received more reports for this species than ever before, presumably because of interest from the Important Bird Area project. From 1–5 were found in 15 counties (m. ob.), nearly all either in the southern three rows of counties or within two counties of the Mississippi R.

**Mourning Warbler:** All: 1 on 2 Jun at Grammer Grove WA *Marshall* (MPR).

**Hooded Warbler:** All reports came from either Yellow River SF *Allamakee* (DK, CE, DAK) or the Donnelson Unit of Shimek SF *Lee* (CE, MCD, CJC, MPR).

**Wilson's Warbler:** One on 1 Jun at Eagle L *Hancock* (PH) was the only report.

**Canada Warbler:** All: 1 on 1 Jun at Stephens SF *Lucas* (AB).

**Yellow-breasted Chat:** One or 2 were found in *Lee, Louisa, Van Buren,* and *Wayne* (AB, CE, MPR, MCD, BFH, AMJ). The only reports outside of southern Iowa were 1 on 9, 22 Jun at Sioux City (GLV, BFH) and 1 on 25 Jun at Yellow River SF *Allamakee* (DK).

**Summer Tanager:** Most reports were from well-known sites in *Fremont, Lee, Van Buren,* and *Warren* (m. ob.). One on 1 Jun at Cardinal M *Winneshiek* (EB) was far from its usual range, and 1 on 16 Jun at Stephens SF *Unionville Unit Davis* (AB) was at a new site for the species.

**Scarlet Tanager:** Reported from 18 counties from throughout Iowa (m. ob.). Koenig found 37 in *Allamakee* during the summer, suggesting that it is fairly common in some parts of Iowa.

**Eastern Towhee:** Presumably underreported, towhees were noted in six counties, mostly in NE Iowa (m. ob.).

**Clay-colored Sparrow:** Three nests in *Dickinson* are the first documented nests for Iowa (EH) (see note in this issue). Other reports were singles on 10 Jun at Cayler Prairie and Freda Haffner Kettlehole *Dickinson* (SSP), 3 on 19 Jun at Anderson Prairie *Emmet* (LAS), 3 on 26 Jun at Gitchie Manitou State Preserve *Lyon* (RIA, PHA), 1 on 19 Jul at Westfork WA *Palo Alto* (AB), and 1 on 24 Jul at Kindlespire P *Clay* (LAS).

**Lark Sparrow:** Also underreported, from 1–4 were found in *Adair, Clayton, Fremont, Hardin, Louisa, Madison, Muscatine, O'Brien, Plymouth, Polk, Poweshiek,* and *Warren* (m. ob.).

**Grasshopper Sparrow:** As many as 20 were reported from sites in about 25 counties covering most of Iowa except the NE corner (m. ob.).

**BAIRD'S SPARROW:** One seen and heard 4 Jun in *Cherokee* (KLP\*) is a long overdue first for this species in Iowa.

**Henslow's Sparrow:** Reported from 17 counties, from the Missouri to the Minnesota borders and as far west as *Emmet*; most reports were east of I-35 (m. ob.). This species seems more widespread and abundant in Iowa than was thought just a few years ago, probably because people are looking for it, are more familiar with its habitat, and have learned its "song."

**Le Conte's Sparrow:** Three singing males were reported on 5, 6 Jun in a brome field in *Clay* (SSP/KLP-details, recording). This is the first summer report of this species in Iowa.

**Swamp Sparrow:** All reports were from north of I-80 where this species is most likely to be found.



**Harris's Sparrow:** One on 2 Jun in Norwalk *Warren* (AMJ) is the first summer report since 2001 and only the fourth on record.

**Blue Grosbeak:** The only reports away from the western border were singles on 2, 6 Jul in Carroll (RTh), 16 Jul at Waterman Creek A O'Brien (LAS), and on 16 Jun in *Cherokee* (LAS).

**Dickcissel:** Common to abundant this summer although I thought that they were hard to find in extreme NE Iowa.

**Bobolink:** With reports from numerous counties and no one indicating that it was scarce this year, this species continues to be fairly common in suitable grasslands throughout Iowa.

**Western Meadowlark:** Three on 6 Jun near Volga and 1 on 19 Jun near Garnavillo, both in *Clayton* (DAK), were at the eastern edge of its Iowa range.

**Yellow-headed Blackbird:** Yellowheads seemed common and were reported from a number of sites outside of their stronghold in north-central and northwestern Iowa.

**Great-tailed Grackle:** Besides reports from established sites in *Hancock*, *Polk*, *Story*, and *Warren* (CJF, BE, HZ, MPr), 2 on 3 Jun in *Osceola* (SSP), 3 on 12 Jun at L Macbride *Johnson* (CE), and 1 on 24 Jun at MidAmerican Energy Ponds *Pottawattamie* (MPr) were at sites where it is not established.

**Orchard Oriole:** With reports from 10 counties including all four corners of the state (m. ob.), this species is statewide in distribution but more abundant in the west.

**Pine Siskin:** One on 15 Jul at L Meyer *Winneshek* (DeC, Larry Reis) is the first Iowa summer report since 2000.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow:** All: 5 on 22 Jun near Burlington *Des Moines* (MPr).



*Sanderling at Oak Grove Beach, Saylorville Lake, Polk Co., 14 August 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Red-headed Woodpecker at Lake Ahquabi State Park, Warren Co., 18 June 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*





*Gray Catbird along gravel road in Warren Co., 18 June 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Dickcissel along gravel road in Warren Co., 19 June 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Marbled Godwit at Colo Ponds, Story Co., 27 June 2004. Photograph by Carl Kurtz, St. Anthony, IA.*



*Lark Sparrow at Woodland Mounds Preserve, Warren Co., 19 June 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

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## COMMENT

This summer I received more than 1,500 sightings from more than 50 people, the most in 21 years. Obviously, all of those reports could not be listed in this report and in many cases, space issues precluded me from acknowledging all of the sightings for a species. Be assured that all reports are important in compiling this summary of the summer season. To all of you, my sincerest thanks for making this report possible and my apologies if I overlooked someone.

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# Thayer's and Kumlien's Iceland Gulls and the State List

W. Ross Silcock

On 31 December 2003, a pale-winged gull, initially thought to be an Iceland Gull, was discovered by Thomas H. Kent, James L. Fuller, and James E. Scheib at Lock and Dam 15 in Davenport, Scott County. The same day, Scheib posted photos of the "Iceland Gull," initiating a debate over the identity of the gull, which was seen by more than 20 birders. The gull was clearly a large, pale *Larus*, and on the basis of these features could easily be assigned to one of three taxa: Thayer's, Iceland, or Glaucous. Size, structure, and plumage features convincingly eliminated Glaucous Gull. But what about the other two taxa? Opinions were split over whether the bird was an Iceland Gull, or merely a Thayer's Gull, the latter much more commonly seen in Iowa. The debate centered on several controversial features of this individual, and highlighted the difficulty of separating these species in the field. Important contributions to the discussion were made by Aaron Brees and Mike Overton, who provided the latest information on key features currently believed best to separate the two taxa. The many interesting and informed posts are archived at <<http://www.iowabirds.org/rarebirds/2004gull.asp>> and a consensus evolved that the bird was indeed a pale Thayer's Gull.

## WHAT IS A THAYER'S GULL?

Since Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*) was first described by Brooks in 1915 it has variously been considered a full species, a subspecies of American Herring Gull (*L. smithsonianus*), and a subspecies of Iceland Gull (*L. glaucoides*) (American Ornithologists' Union 1998). While the Herring Gull idea is no longer seriously considered to be correct, the relationship between Thayer's Gull and Iceland Gull continues to be controversial. In his recent *Birds of North America* monograph, Snell (2002) suggests the two should be considered a single species. Snell noted that nominate Iceland Gull in the east (southern Greenland) is connected genetically to Thayer's Gull in the northwest (Banks Island, northwest Canada) by colonies of intermediate birds often referred to as Iceland (Kumlien's) Gull (*Larus glaucoides kumlieni*). Snell noted that there was a continuous cline in adult plumage across this range, and that mating in mixed colonies of Thayer's and Kumlien's Gulls was random.

On the other hand, it is believed by many that Thayer's Gull and nominate Iceland Gull are indeed separate species, and that Kumlien's Gull, while intermediate between the two, is a stable "hybrid swarm," similar to that found in the Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis cismontanus*). For Kumlien's Gull to be a stable population of introgressants (a "hybrid swarm"), interbreeding by Kumlien's Gull with Iceland Gull to the east and Thayer's Gull to the west must be limited or nonexistent, allowing little or no gene flow between the three forms. Indeed, data in Snell (2002) support this idea. Snell (2002; Appendix 2) lists only two mixed colonies of Thayer's and Kumlien's Gulls, one of 45–50 pairs on Bell Peninsula, Southampton Island (37% Kumlien's) and the other, of 39 pairs on Coats Island (77% Kumlien's). The only colony containing Kumlien's and Iceland Gulls consisted of 82 pairs at Home Bay, Baffin Island, >80% Kumlien's. The same Appendix 2

estimates total breeding pairs for the three forms as follows (excluding mixed colonies mentioned above): 4,100 Thayer's, 1,170 Kumlien's, and 80,000 Iceland. The three mixed colonies contain additional pairs as follows: 58 Thayer's, 27 Kumlien's, and 16 Iceland. Thus, a very small proportion of the total breeding pairs occur in mixed colonies, and, even if mating was random, there can be very little gene flow between the three forms.

Assuming that virtually all of the nominate Iceland Gulls breeding in Greenland do not winter in Canada or the United States, and that Thayer's winters mostly on the Pacific Coast and Kumlien's on the Atlantic, birders in Iowa might expect some of each, possibly close to a 4:1 ratio of Thayer's to Kumlien's that is based on the total number of breeding pairs of these forms (see above). A look at Kent and Dinsmore (1996) shows about 40 records of Thayer's and nine of Iceland (=Kumlien's), in close agreement with the suggested 4:1 ratio.

Finally, and not incidentally, if "Kumlien's Gull" is indeed a "hybrid swarm," or some sort of intermediate population between nominate Iceland Gull of Greenland and Thayer's Gull, should it be considered a full species? If not, then it follows that all records of what has been previously thought of as "Iceland Gull," most if not all more correctly assigned to "Kumlien's Gull," should be removed from the Iowa bird list.

#### HOW DO YOU TELL THEM APART?

Individuals at each end of the plumage cline, currently labeled Iceland Gull and Thayer's Gull, are readily separable in the field. However, Kumlien's Gull complicates the identification process considerably. Most, if not all, sightings reported as "Iceland Gull" in the central United States are in fact Kumlien's Gulls. Thus, the identification problem we have in Iowa is separation of Thayer's and Kumlien's Gulls. Some of the features often used are in fact variable both within and between the two forms to the point that, at best, they are only indicative. Examples are iris color in adults and tail band appearance in first winter birds (in both cases, darker is indicative of Thayer's Gull). Below are some features that, if they all can be found on any individual, will safely identify that individual to species.

*Adults:* The two most useful features in definitive basic (adult winter) plumage (the plumage seen in Iowa) are primary coloration and extent of head streaking. As Snell (2002) pointed out, there is a continuous cline of variation in the degree of blackness in adult primary tips from the blackest Thayer's Gulls in the west to the palest Kumlien's Gulls in the east. However, any bird with primary tips that are not black is very likely to be a Kumlien's Gull. Snell (2002) does note that the primaries of some Kumlien's may "include some black markings," but his description of Kumlien's Gull suggests that such birds are few. Thayer's Gulls have extensive head streaking, making for a hooded appearance, whereas streaking on Kumlien's Gulls is limited and hardly noticeable. Structural features are also useful. The often-mentioned "daintier" jizz of Kumlien's Gull separates it in many cases from the more Herring Gull-like jizz of Thayer's Gull. The latter typically has a stouter bill and less-rounded head.

*First winter birds* (because 2nd and 3rd year birds are few, we do not deal with them here): The tendency for Thayer's Gull to be more heavily pigmented is also reflected in the plumage of first winter birds. In general, a pale bird is a Kumlien's and a dark bird a Thayer's, and the structural features discussed above also apply to young birds. Of course, the problem is identification of intermediate birds. These birds have to be carefully stud-

ied in good conditions to determine their identity. Perhaps the most important place to look is the tertials, the large, usually rather easily seen feathers that cover the folded upper tail. In general, on Thayer's Gull these are dark and evenly colored except for variable pale edges, whereas on Kumlien's, the tertials contain a variable amount of distal patterning. Another useful point to look for is the color of the primary feathers relative to overall body plumage color. On Thayer's Gulls, the primaries are darker than the general plumage, but are lighter in the case of Kumlien's Gulls.

The field identification of Thayer's and Iceland Gulls, whether they maintain full species status or are eventually lumped, is a fun and challenging exercise in bird identification. And, as illustrated in this example, one of the benefits of such a lengthy discussion on the identification of a particular individual is that, living in Iowa, we all have opportunities to hone our bird identification skills of winter gulls. (See *Birding Mississippi River Pool 19* by Michael C. Dooley in this issue.)

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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## Yellow-headed Blackbirds in Iowa: A 44-Year Perspective

*James J. Dinsmore*

In 1960–1962, in an attempt to delineate the distribution of Yellow-headed Blackbirds in Iowa, Milton Weller surveyed a number of Iowa wetlands and found active Yellow-headed Blackbird colonies at 27 sites (Weller 1969). Weller noted that most colonies were within the Des Moines Lobe, the most recently glaciated region of Iowa, which extends north from Des Moines through north-central and northwestern Iowa into Minnesota, the Dakotas, and southern Canada. Within that region, Yellow-headed Blackbirds seemed to prefer wetlands that contained robust emergent plants like cattail



with numerous openings in the vegetation. Small wetlands surrounded by trees rarely had Yellow-headed Blackbird colonies.

In 1983 and 1984, Mike Brown revisited Weller's 27 sites to see if Yellow-headed Blackbirds still nested there (Brown 1988). He found Yellow-heads at 24 of the 27 sites (Table 1). Two of the wetlands that were not occupied (Swan Lake and Little Wall Lake) lacked adequate stands of robust emergent vegetation. In the case of Little Wall Lake, this was due to a change in water level as the lake was converted from a marsh to a deeper lake suitable for boating and fishing in the early 1960s (Weller and Spatcher 1965). The third site with no Yellow-heads (Cardinal Marsh) was dry when Brown visited it.

In the 40 plus years since Weller's original study, much has changed in Iowa. In particular, a program of wetland restoration was begun in the late 1980s. As a result, more than 1,250 wetland basins that were dry (and mostly farmed) at the time of Weller's study, are now flooded (Bishop et al. 1998). A number of these have been colonized by Yellow-heads. Although a few of Iowa's wetlands were drained in the 1970s and 1980s, all of the 27 sites surveyed by Weller are still intact. Thus, in 2004, I revisited the original 27 sites and collected information on Yellow-headed Blackbird use in an attempt to see if those colonies had persisted. I also reviewed information from several other studies to help assess the current distribution of this species in Iowa.

## METHODS

All 27 sites contained water during May and June 2004 when I visited them to assess their use by Yellow-heads. At each site, I scanned the marsh and looked for male Yellow-heads perched on emergent plants, territorial disputes between Yellow-heads, or Yellow-heads flying over the marsh. I did not search for nests but assumed that the presence of territorial males during the breeding season was evidence that Yellow-heads were nesting at that site. Weller did not describe his methods but presumably they were similar to mine. Brown indicated that he used the presence of at least one territorial male Yellow-head as evidence of nesting at a site. In addition to those 27 sites, I also visited a number of other wetlands throughout Iowa during May and June 2004 and noted whether Yellow-heads were present. I received information from others concerning the status of Yellow-heads at several sites that I was unable to visit during 2004.

## RESULTS

I found Yellow-headed Blackbirds nesting on 22 of the 27 sites (Table 1), three fewer than found by Brown (1988). Yellow-headed Blackbirds were not nesting at either of the sites where they were missing in 1983–1984. Again, both Little Wall Lake and Swan Lake lacked any significant stands of robust emergent vegetation. In addition, I found no Yellow-heads at Brown's Lake, East and West Twin Lakes, and Elk Creek Marsh. Each of those sites appeared to have limited suitable Yellow-head nesting habitat in 2004. At several sites with Yellow-heads, the nesting population was probably fewer than 25 males, but at most sites the nesting population probably exceeded 100 males and in some cases was much greater than that.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this survey show that although the overall nesting range of Yellow-headed Blackbirds in Iowa has not diminished since the early 1960s, several of the sites where Weller found Yellow-heads in the early 1960s no longer support that species. Two

of the nesting sites where they are now missing have had considerable habitat change and little robust emergent vegetation is present. At the other three sites, the lack of suitable habitat may be only a temporary situation.

Although all 27 sites were flooded in 2004, vegetation conditions were not ideal for Yellow-heads at several sites that traditionally have been strongholds of the species. Typically, Yellow-heads are found in larger wetlands and usually occupy the deeper portions of those wetlands whereas Red-winged Blackbirds occupy the shallow areas around the marsh's edge (Weller and Spatcher 1965). In 2004, several wetlands, which in past years have often had many Yellow-heads, had only a narrow band of emergent vegetation around the edge of the marsh and little or no emergent vegetation in deeper water (e.g., South Twin Lake, Trumbull Lake, Dan Green Slough). Although a few Yellow-heads were present, their numbers seemed decreased from past years. Several other wetlands were mostly choked with thick stands of cattail with few openings (e.g., Union Slough, Round Lake). Such areas tend to be occupied by Red-wings, and few Yellow-heads were present in 2004. Finally, two large lakes (Spirit Lake, Storm Lake) now have cottages and homes around much of their periphery and the only habitat suitable for nesting Yellow-heads is found in nearby connected sloughs (e.g., Hales Slough, Little Storm Lake). Recent development around Silver Lake may eventually prevent Yellow-heads from nesting there too.

Weller noted the association of Yellow-head colonies with the Des Moines Lobe region of Iowa. Of his 27 sites, 22 were within that landform region of Iowa. That association was also evident from the results of the Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas project (Jackson et al. 1996). In that 6-year project, Yellow-headed Blackbirds were confirmed as breeding in 70 atlas blocks, 45 of which (64%) were in the Des Moines Lobe.

Many other wetlands within the Des Moines Lobe that were not surveyed by Weller also support Yellow-headed Blackbird colonies. In particular, the wetlands of the Jemmeson Slough/Kettleson Hogsback area west of Spirit Lake, Spring Run area southeast of Spirit Lake, Deweys Pasture area north of Ruthven, and Union Hills area south of Clear Lake, none of which were part of this study, all contain numerous Yellow-headed Blackbird colonies. In general, Yellow-heads are common nesters on prairie wetlands, especially those that are larger and deeper, throughout the Des Moines Lobe of Iowa. However, Yellow-head colonies become more scattered in occurrence at the southern end of the lobe. Brown (1985) found Yellow-heads nesting on 28 of 30 wetlands he surveyed in 1983 and 1984; they were absent only from two small wetlands in Story County. Although typically found on larger wetlands, Brown found Yellow-heads nesting on several wetlands of less than one hectare.

Although Yellow-heads are most common in the Des Moines Lobe, they do nest elsewhere in Iowa. Of Weller's 27 sites, two were along the Missouri River, two were on the Iowan Surface in east-central Iowa, and one was at the edge of the Paleozoic Plateau in northeastern Iowa (for descriptions of these landform regions, see Jackson et al. 1996). Likewise, in the Breeding Bird Atlas project, nesting Yellow-headed Blackbirds, while most common in the Des Moines lobe, were found elsewhere in Iowa. Yellow-heads were confirmed as breeding in 25 atlas blocks from outside of the Des Moines Lobe: nine on the Iowan Surface in eastern Iowa, eight along the Missouri River, and eight elsewhere in the state (Jackson et al. 1996). These comprised 36% of the 70 blocks with confirmed nesting by Yellow-heads during that study. In 2004, some of the sites outside of the Des Moines Lobe where Yellow-headed Blackbirds nested include Bakewell's Pond in

Allamakee County, the Iowa River Corridor south of Belle Plaine in Benton County, Goose Lake in Clinton County, Green Island area in Jackson County, Otter Creek Marsh in Tama County, and Banner Wildlife Area in Warren County.

An important factor that has provided additional nesting habitat for Yellow-headed Blackbirds in Iowa has been the wetland restoration program that began about 1987. During that time more than 1,250 previously drained basins have been restored to wetland conditions, mostly in the Des Moines Lobe but also elsewhere in the state. Many of these wetlands have been quickly colonized by Yellow-heads and on many of these wetlands it is one of the most common nesting species (VanRees-Siewert 1993). As a result, a number of areas that had not had nesting Yellow-headed Blackbirds for many decades now have well established colonies. The following is a small sample of the many restored wetlands within the Des Moines Lobe that now support colonies of Yellow-headed Blackbirds: Harrier Marsh in Boone County, Union Hills in Cerro Gordo County, Maynard Reece in Kossuth County, Errington Marsh in Polk County, and Colo Ponds in Story County.

## SUMMARY

In 2004, 27 sites where Yellow-headed Blackbirds were found nesting in 1960–1962 were revisited to see if those colonies were still active. Yellow-headed Blackbirds were found nesting on 22 of the 27 in 2004. Two of the sites that lacked nesting Yellow-heads also lacked large stands of robust emergent vegetation suitable for nesting. The other three sites that had no Yellow-heads had some emergent vegetation and could easily be occupied again in future years. As at the time of the original study, Yellow-head colonies were largely concentrated in the Des Moines Lobe landform region of Iowa but they also nested at a number of wetlands outside of that region of the state. Wetland restoration in Iowa has provided hundreds of newly flooded basins, many of which have been colonized by Yellow-heads. I believe that these restored basins have allowed Yellow-headed Blackbirds to fill in many gaps in its nesting range in Iowa, especially in the Des Moines Lobe. The overall nesting range of the Yellow-headed Blackbird has probably not changed much in recent decades but within that range, Yellow-heads probably nest on more wetlands than they did a few decades ago.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I appreciate the help of Carolyn Fischer, Jay Gilliam, Paul Hertzell, Bill Scheible, and Gerald Von Ehwegen who commented on the presence of Yellow-headed Blackbirds at several wetlands around Iowa. Jay Gilliam is also responsible for the striking photograph of a male Yellow-headed Blackbird on the back cover of this issue. The earlier surveys by Milton Weller and Mike Brown provided an interesting historical background for this survey. My thanks to all of the above.

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**Table 1. Status of Yellow-headed Blackbird nesting colonies based on surveys in 1960–1962 (Weller 1965), 1983–1984 (Brown 1988), and in 2004 (this study)**

County and location	1960–1962	1983–1984	2004
Buena Vista, Storm Lake	N <sup>a</sup>	N	N
Calhoun, South Twin Lake	N	N	N
Cerro Gordo, Ventura Marsh	N	N	N
Clay, Dan Green Slough	N	N	N
Clay, Round Lake	N	N	N
Clay, Trumbull Lake	N	N	N
Dickinson, Silver Lake	N	N	N
Dickinson, Spirit Lake	N	N	N
Greene, Goose Lake	N	N	N
Greene, Finn Pond	N	N	N
Hamilton, Anderson (= Goose) Lake	N	N	N
Hamilton, Little W all Lake <sup>b</sup>	N	A <sup>c</sup>	A
Hancock, Eagle Lake	N	N	N
Hancock, East and West Twin Lakes	N	N	A
Jones, Muskrat Slough	N	N	N
Johnson, Swan Lake <sup>d</sup>	N	A	A
Kossuth, Union Slough	N	N	N
Monona, Blue Lake and Decatur Bend	N	N	N
Palo Alto, Rush Lake	N	N	N
Pocahontas, Sunken Grove	N	N	N
Story, Teig's Marsh	N	N	N
Winneshiek, Cardinal Marsh	N	N	N
Woodbury, Brown's Lake	N	N	A
Worth, Elk Creek Marsh	N	N	A
Wright, Big W all Lake	N	N	N
Wright, Elm Lake	N	N	N
Wright, Morse Lake	N	N	N

<sup>a</sup> N = nesting.

<sup>b,d</sup> No suitable emergent habitat at Little W all Lake and Swan Lake in 2004.

<sup>c</sup> A = absent.

# Birding Mississippi River Pool 19 in Winter

*Michael C. Dooley*

In winter, the Mississippi River above Lock & Dam 19 from Keokuk to north of Fort Madison, known as Pool 19, provides some of the best birding for diving ducks available in the state. There are also opportunities for observing gulls, although not of the quality found at the east-central locks and dams at Davenport and Le Claire, IA. In either case, unlike for the state's many public natural areas, reference to the normally indispensable *Iowa Sportsman's Atlas* is not much help for a day of scoping the river along Pool 19. The best viewing areas are often obscure and not connected with typical public sites. Some are literally no more than wide spots in a county road, others may be the dead-ends of small-town streets. Descriptions of the birding possibilities in each section of the tour generally assume ideal conditions on the river, the best balance between ice and open water that concentrates the ducks and gulls in particular areas. Naturally this will vary considerably over the course of the Mississippi River's winter season for any given spot.

## PLANNING YOUR OUTING

The tour as laid out here begins at Fort Madison, IA, moves downriver on the Illinois side to Keokuk, IA and returns upriver on the Iowa side to a few miles north beyond Fort Madison. It is actually doubtful that you could thoroughly bird every point discussed in this essay in a single, shortened winter day. If you are primarily out for a good session of scoping diving ducks, you will probably want to target the Nauvoo area in Illinois. The angle of the sun will be favorable at any of the several viewing spots in and around Nauvoo during the morning, and if you are not planning to make a full day of it on Pool 19, you are almost certain to get more birds here than at any other point on the river. If conditions are right, it is not unusual for the diving ducks at this annual staging area to number 10,000–12,000, and even substantially more, in a nearly continuous raft several miles in length. Further, the nature of this section of the Mississippi River is such that when the river is half frozen, which is ideal, the open water tends to be toward the Illinois side. As a bonus, if you are scrupulous about your state list, note that according to U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps, Iowa takes up two-thirds of the river at this point, and most of your finds from Nauvoo technically will be Iowa birds, given that diving ducks tend to stay out from shore.

As you might imagine, the most obvious place for sorting through gull populations is at Lock & Dam 19 in Keokuk. However, the viewing in the area is distant compared to other dams, and in the case of the more conventionally public sites at the dam itself, is partly obstructed. Still, it is possible to find at least some satisfaction for the gulling urge when in Keokuk if you also experiment with the alternative scoping locations around the area. Nor is Lock & Dam 19 limited to gulls; there are ducks to be scoped in the pool upriver, although this experience, too, has its limitations. Elsewhere, the ice at Montrose, IA, typically offers some roosting gulls to work with as well.

Of course, you can jump to whatever part of the tour suits your fancy, although in some cases you will have to figure out your directions working in reverse. Because this

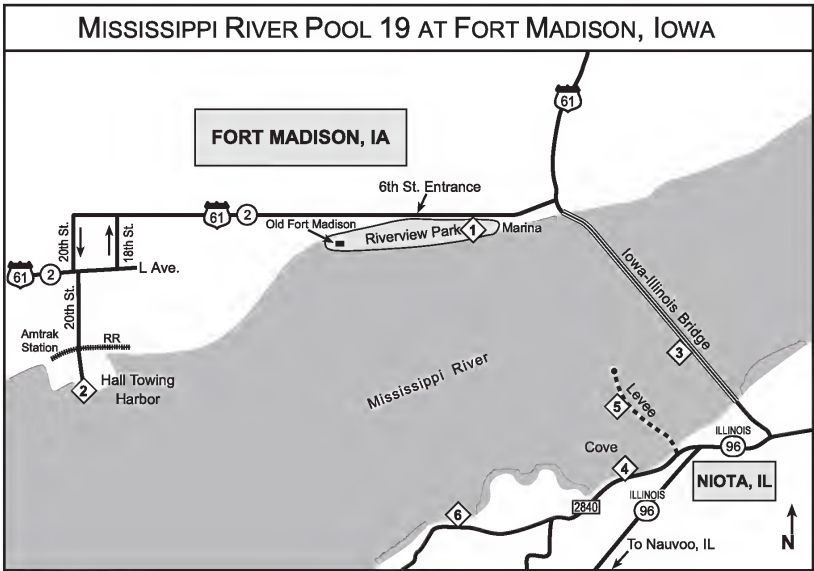


article lays out a one-way circular route, occasionally we have included directions for arriving at a general area while traveling in the opposite direction to the described tour. Some birders, for example, like to do Nauvoo and then go back through Fort Madison and down to Montrose to zero in on birds that have caught their eye from across the way in Illinois. If you are doing a shorter day of it and staying north of Keokuk, you still might want to finish up at the Colusa Elevator in Green Bay Twp., on the Iowa side and just north of Fort Madison, so be sure and note the last section of this essay.

## POOL 19 AT FORT MADISON, IOWA

### Riverview Park

Begin the tour at the upriver end of Fort Madison in Lee County (**Figure 1**). Fort Madison is generally oriented toward the south, from a birder's point of view, and so in regard to the angle of the sun it is probably best to work from here first thing in the morning. The most extensive area to openly scope the Mississippi River at Fort Madison is Riverview Park (**Figure 1.1**), and under the right conditions there can be healthy numbers of ducks to sort through from there. The park is readily visible alongside U.S. 61/Iowa Hwy. 2 in town, located between the Iowa-Illinois bridge upriver and 12th St. downriver. At Riverview Park you can scope along the waterfront from near the bridge to downriver at the historic timber fort from which the city gets its name. Enter the park at 6th St. and the standard parking area is easily found. To start off closest to the bridge, which might be your best bet on a sunny morning, drive straight down to the river on the 6th St. entrance road and turn left at Marina Dr., which runs directly along the shore. Head toward the bridge and park in the very large marina parking lot. While on the riverfront, scope downriver for a shoal that often has good gull populations on or about it,



*Figure 1. Fort Madison, Iowa: (1) Riverview Park, (2) Hall Towing Harbor, (3) river view from Illinois side at base of Iowa-Illinois Bridge, (4) cove on County Rd. 2840, (5) levee, (6) viewing from County Rd. 2840.*

depending on the level of the river. The shoal is closer to the Illinois side, and the best chance at closer viewing is from outside Niota, IL, described below.

Also while working from Riverview Park, take note of a long, thin, wooded finger of land — an old levee, actually — extending out from the Illinois side, to the right of an inlet at the base of the bridge. You should be able to see an elevated viewing platform standing at the tip of this peninsula. Directions for scoping from this levee and the platform are found below, in the Niota, IL, section.

### **Hall Towing Harbor**

If from Riverview Park it looks like there are good duck populations to examine farther downriver, you can look from Hall Towing Harbor (**Figure 1.2**). Continue downriver through Fort Madison, following U.S. 61/Hwy. 2. At 20th St., a one-way street, U.S. 61/Hwy. 2 turns south. Take this left-hand turn and proceed down 20th St., still following the highways, three blocks to L Ave., where there is a traffic light. At L Ave., U.S. 61/Hwy. 2 resumes going west, to the right, but you will continue south on 20th, which involves a slight jog to the left. Just before reaching the river going down 20th St., you will cross two adjacent sets of railroad tracks and enter an open, unnamed, commercial-looking space. Hall Towing is seen off to the left, and therefore the area is sometimes referred to in Fort Madison as Hall Towing Harbor. This is an unrestricted space and a long-established spot from which to scope the river. There are usually both duck and gull populations to be seen, with the gulls mainly at a shallow cove to your right, although the shoal mentioned in the Riverview Park section is also visible from here. Fort Madison is not a hotbed for gulls, but Glaucous and Thayer's have been identified here. Good duck populations may also be visible farther downriver from Hall Towing Harbor. You will be facing generally southwest for these, and therefore the winter sun, riding lower this time of year, might be a problem by mid-afternoon.

To return upriver through Fort Madison, you will turn right at L Ave., and follow the U.S. 61/Hwy. 2 signs. The highways jog north at 18th St., a one-way street.

If you are precise about state listing, according to the Geological Survey maps the Iowa-Illinois border at Fort Madison gives only about one-third of the river to Iowa birds at Riverview Park, and about half the river at Hall Towing Harbor.

### **Iowa-Illinois Bridge at Fort Madison**

If a view from the bridge would seem to help you identify a bird more surely, mainly in the Iowa half of the river, there is a safe and legal spot for scoping just past the Illinois end of the bridge proper. Have a dollar handy for the toll going across, and also be wary while negotiating the somewhat confusing intersection from which you enter the bridge off U.S. 61/Hwy. 2. At the base of the bridge on the Illinois side, meaning after the guard rails end, there is a gravel turn-out offering a nicely open view out over the river (**Figure 1.3**). Your picture of the river on its Illinois half is cut off, however, by the wooded levee extending out into the river, as seen from Riverview Park in Fort Madison.

### **POOL 19 AT NIOTA, ILLINOIS**

The Niota area is not ideal for general birding of the Mississippi River. Instead, the places described below offer some potential for getting a better look at a given bird or population that you may have spotted from Fort Madison, including looks at the downriver shoal with the gull population. If you feel that you have already seen what there is

to see in this section of the river, you can save some time by simply moving on to Nauvoo via Illinois Hwy. 96, as described later in the essay.

### **Illinois County Road 2840**

Otherwise, continue from the gravel turn-out on the bridge to the T-intersection with Illinois Hwy. 96 (**Figure 1**). Turn right, downriver, through the little town of Niota, and quickly come to where Hwy. 96 curves sharply left, indicated by the standard yellow highway sign with a bold black arrow. Drive straight ahead here, passing left of the yellow arrow sign, onto the gravel road in front of you, Co. Rd. 2840. Very soon you will pass the levy seen from Riverview Park and come to a large cove on your right (**Figure 1.4**). This spot affords an open if somewhat distant view of the river. Your view is limited to an extent both by the peninsulas on either side as well as by a vegetation-covered islet a short way out, although this stretch of road will allow you to maneuver your position a little to work around the islet. The cove itself, however, often has good roosting gull populations, as well as dabbling ducks. These are all Illinois birds, of course.

### **The Levee and Its Viewing Platform**

If you would like a different angle on any birds in the cove, as well as some alternative views out onto the river, you can walk up the long wooded levee on the right side of the cove. A rough entrance lane is found at the base of the levee. The two-rut lane extends all the way to the end and makes for about a ten-minute walk in snowless conditions. Although the lane is passable all the way in, driving it is not a good idea; you will almost certainly have to back out the entire length, and it will not be plowed if there is snow. Park along the county road however you can manage it, and enter on foot.

You can pick your scoping spots from among the trees along the way, or you can try the elevated viewing platform at the very end of the walk (**Figure 1.5**). The platform is roomy and solid, and will comfortably accommodate two birders with scopes, but no more. There are no railings on this platform, however, and the short gap between it and the ground of the levee is bridged by taking a step or two across a heavy plank. It also has a slightly homemade look to it in comparison with what you might find at, for example, a state park. In addition to these factors, which alone may give you pause, consider that this platform stands unprotected in whatever winter winds are blowing along the river; not only might there be snow on the platform, but ice as well. Make use of it only under the safest possible weather conditions.

That said, the platform does offer the best view that you are likely to have of the gulls on the shoal, and a unique viewing experience of the river in general.

### **Farther along the County Road**

There is another possibility for viewing of the river and the gull shoal a short distance downriver from the peninsula and the cove. Continue on the gravel county road, soon passing a couple of houses on either side of another gravel road going off to the left. (There is no sign here.) Still following along the river, you will enter a more wooded section of the road, with an isolated homestead appearing on the shoreline side. Drive along here looking for the best openings you can find through the trees to scope (**Figure 1.6**). There is enough semblance of a shoulder to pull at least partly off the road, and there is very little traffic here. When the road begins to rise and curve left, away from the river, there is no more scoping to be had from it.

## POOL 19 AT NAUVOO, ILLINOIS

Return now to Illinois Hwy. 96 and turn right, downriver. As the prominent sign tells you, it is nine miles to Nauvoo.

### Old Ferry Boat Landing at Parley Street

Entering Nauvoo (**Figure 2**) on Hwy. 96, you will find yourself on Mulholland St. going west through town. At the end of the shops and restaurants section, look for the famous Mormon Temple on your right, which is impossible to miss, and continue straight west through here on Mulholland, despite that Hwy. 96 now turns south. (Follow the sign for the Visitor's Center.) At this point you are entering the Mormon historical district of Nauvoo, and Mulholland is now a narrow, one-way lane. Continue west along Mulholland past Partridge St. to a T-intersection with Main St., and turn left (away from the Visitor's Center). The third street you come to along Main St. is Parley Street. Turn right on Parley and follow it to the old ferry boat landing on the river, simply an open point on the bank (**Figure 2.1**). Note that Montrose, Iowa, is directly across the river. If conditions are right, here you will have your first look at the mammoth duck rafts that stage from this part of the Mississippi River. Greater Scaup is annual among these rafts, usually a dozen birds or so, but sometimes substantially more. Long-tailed Duck is a good bet, too, and any of the three scoter species may be seen from time to time. Redhead and Ruddy Duck, hard to find in winter away from the river, are regular, the latter ranging unpredictably in number from a few dozen birds to upwards of 2,000 or more.

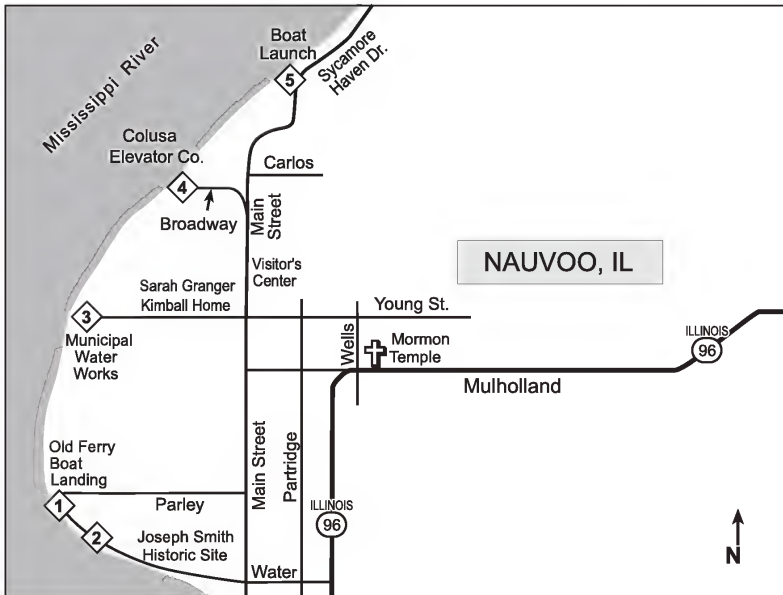


Figure 2. Nauvoo, Illinois: (1) Old Ferry Boat Landing, (2) viewing site northwest of Joseph Smith Historic Site, (3) Municipal Water Works, (4) Nauvoo Colusa Elevator, (5) boat launch.

When finished at the landing, which is at the western extreme of the large point on which Nauvoo sits, continue around the sharp bend heading downriver. The first few hundred yards of this road, to shortly before the Joseph Smith Historic Site, follows closely along the shore and offers unobstructed river viewing, including downriver toward the southeast (**Figure 2.2**). Parking is easy along the gravel.

### **Nauvoo Municipal Water Works**

Soon you will emerge from this shoreline road back onto Main Street. Turn left and proceed upriver (north) on Main St. to Young St., the first street after Mulholland. Turn left at the sign for the Sarah Granger Kimball Home and follow Young St. west toward the river, past the lane to the Kimball home. When the road curves left, continue straight ahead, past the directional sign for the Maintenance Shop, to the parking lot of the municipal water works, a brick building on the river (**Figure 2.3**). The supervisor asks that you park on the right-hand side of the lot. From here, walk around the right side of the building to scope the river.

### **Colusa Elevator Company**

There is a commercial grain elevator at Nauvoo with an excellent, roomy spot for open viewing of the river (**Figure 2.4**). However, visits are only allowed during business hours, Monday through Friday from 8:00 to 4:30; otherwise the entrance gate is closed and locked. The management will allow you to bird there on the weekend if you call a day or two in advance for permission at (217) 453-2216. You can then simply walk around the gate. Even if arriving during business hours, it is best to stop at the office and let them know what you are up to. The office is close to the river and to your left, set back a little from the road.

To get to the grain elevator, return to Main St. from the water works and continue upriver past the Visitor's Center on your right. Follow the leftward bend in Main St., becoming Broadway, to the elevator's entrance road. There is ample room to park at the river on the right-hand side of the road.

Given the restrictions for birding the Colusa elevator, it should be said that between scoping from the water works downriver, and the boat access upriver (see below), you should be able to pick up most birds in the area of the elevator.

### **Public Boat Access and Sycamore Haven Drive**

As described above for reaching the Colusa Elevator, Main St. bends riverward at the north edge of town. To reach the public boat access, continue straight upriver here rather than following the bend onto Broadway. At this point you are on Sycamore Haven Drive. Pass Carlos St. on your right and continue through two sharp turns until you come to the boat launch on your left (**Figure 2.5**), which provides another session of wide-open scoping. From the boat launch, continue north on Sycamore Haven Dr. and look for comfortable places to park alongside the road, of which there are a few here and there (more difficult with solid snow cover), to continue scoping. Vehicles are occasional, but it is not a busy road. You can continue scoping for a little more than a mile after the boat launch, until you begin to see cottages on the river side of the road. At the farthest point from which you can work the river, you will be viewing waterfowl that are across from the Heron Bend area in Iowa (described later in this article).



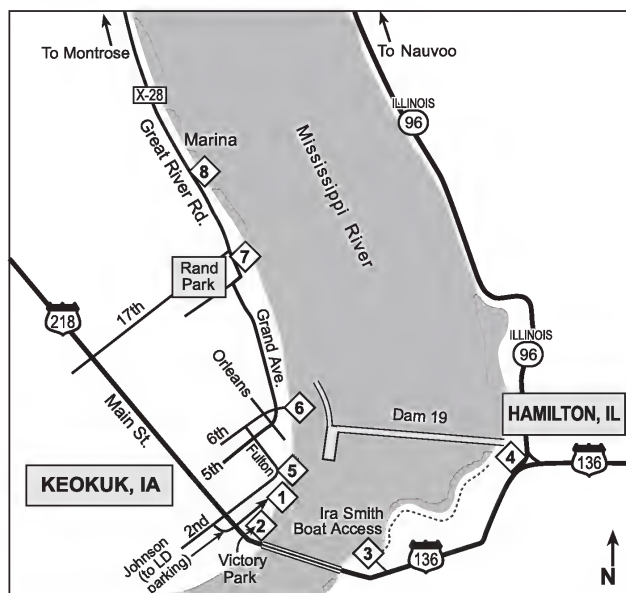
To return to Hwy. 96, drive a short distance along the cottages until you see a road going right, which is Co. Rd. 2570. (Sycamore Haven dead-ends soon after this.) Turn right, going uphill — somewhat bumpy at first — and continue one mile eastward until meeting Co. Rd. 800, which actually means just following the natural curve to the right of the road you are already on. Follow Co. Rd. 800 for 1.5 miles back to Hwy. 96, emerging just northeast of Nauvoo.

### Scoping the River While Traveling South to Lock & Dam 19 at Keokuk, Iowa

To continue on to Keokuk from Nauvoo (**Figure 3**), simply stay on Illinois Hwy. 96. South of Nauvoo the highway runs very close to the river the entire distance to Hamilton, IL, which is across the bridge from Keokuk. There are plenty of scenic turn-outs and picnic areas along the way where you can scope the river if something looks interesting, and it is not unusual for the large staging duck rafts to extend south of Nauvoo. Gulls on the frozen river are always a possibility, too. If you are looking for a rest room, there is one about eleven miles south of Nauvoo, at the picnic area just past the Gray's Point scenic turnout.

### Lock & Dam and Pool 19 in Keokuk, Iowa

Lock & Dam 19 (**Figure 3**) always supports a substantial gull population, both fishing the spillway and roosting about the dam and pool area. As discussed in the introduction, however, the gulls here can be difficult to sort through relative to some of the Mississippi River's other locks and dams.



*Figure 3. Lock & Dam 19, Keokuk, Iowa, and Hamilton, Illinois: (1) Lock & Dam 19 parking lot, (2) Victory Park, (3) Ira Smith Boat Access, (4) intersection of U.S. 136 and Illinois Hwy. 96, (5) viewing point from 2nd Street, (6) viewing point from end of 6th Street, (7) viewing point at chain-link fence along Grand Avenue, (8) turn-out on Great River Road/Co. Rd. X-28 south of marina.*

**Important Note:** Directions and notes involving Lock & Dam 19 at Keokuk assume that the regular level of public access is available. Depending on circumstances, such access may be decreased during this era of high national security concerns. You should also bear in mind how you might be perceived if pointing a spotting scope at a dam during higher alert statuses, perhaps particularly from the more unofficial locations described in this essay.

### **Public Parking Area for Lock & Dam 19**

The first thing to know is that the public parking area for Lock & Dam 19 does not open until 8:00 a.m. If you are starting out in Keokuk, though, you can occupy yourself at some of the other sites discussed below.

If you are entering Keokuk from Illinois, the first cross street you arrive at over the bridge is 2nd St., with a traffic light. If coming into town down Main St. from U.S. 218 in Iowa, 2nd St. is the light before entering the bridge to Illinois. (This bridge is not a toll bridge, by the way.) Turn downriver at 2nd St. and take the first left, heading riverward, at Johnson Street. You will soon pass a church on your left, and Johnson St. will curve leftward. Continue straight ahead, now traveling upriver toward the lock and dam, and pass the Keokuk Waterworks on your left, which has a bold blue sign on the building. Soon this road takes a sharp right turn over the railroad tracks and you will see the sign in front of you that directs you left to the lock and dam parking area. Note the elevated observation deck on your right as you approach the parking lot (**Figure 3.1**).

The observation deck allows viewing of the top half of the dam, although at something of a distance. The lower half of the dam and the spillway below are obscured by opaque fencing along the spillway wall. Further, the dam's power plant is attached at a right angle to the dam itself, on the Iowa side, and extends downriver along the spillway, obstructing all of your view of the near end of the dam. In all, following the flight of a single interesting gull working the spillway might be frequently interrupted from here.

Setting up in front of the chain link fence from the sidewalk off the parking lot, you can scope upriver, up the lock, for waterfowl on the pool. Here, too, however, the situation is not perfect. A long, low seawall extends upriver from the power plant into the pool, defining the approach area for the lock. From this angle the power plant blocks all of your view of the water immediately above the dam, and the seawall hides part of the water as well, although you can scope the farther portion beyond it. On the plus side, the seawall is a very popular roost for the gulls, and all in all, one can still make plenty of duck identifications from the parking area, particularly looking straight up the lock.

### **Victory Park**

If gull viewing from the observation deck proves unsatisfying, you may wish to look from Victory Park (**Figure 3.2**), a small park directly alongside the downriver end of the lock. Its parking area is back down the lane past the Keokuk Waterworks and to your left, underneath the bridge. Victory Park comes with its own frustrations, however. The swing section of the old railroad bridge is now permanently locked in the open position, and so it runs parallel to and slightly elevated above the lock on its farther side. As a result, the swing bridge creates a major block to viewing the upper half of the dam from Victory Park. Because gulls have a habit of changing position vertically as well as horizontally while working a dam, it is debatable whether you will get any extra help here for a particular bird you have your eye on.

If you have spotted a gull from either the observation deck or Victory Park that seems worth pursuing, and you are birding before December 1st or after the end of February, with a little work you can get closer to it from the Ira Smith Boat Access area across the bridge in Hamilton, IL, discussed next. Following the Hamilton section, we will return to Keokuk and its views down onto Lock & Dam 19 and its pool from the city's bluff-top neighborhoods.

## LOCK & DAM 19 FROM HAMILTON, ILLINOIS

### Ira Smith Boat Access

The Ira Smith Boat Access area (**Figure 3.3**) across the river from Keokuk offers a chance to work with Lock & Dam 19's gulls from the closest range in the vicinity, including from very near the foot of the dam. There is also a flat along the shore directly below the dam on the Illinois side that often holds a number of roosting gulls, and this, too, is best viewed from the Ira Smith area. The main drawback to Ira Smith is that the entire area is closed from December 1st to March 1st as a protected Bald Eagle roost. Further, getting close to the dam is not always a smooth hike. Directions are offered here, not so much as part of the continuing tour, but as a side excursion if needed and available. Nevertheless, Laughing Gull was identified below the dam in August 2004, and gulls in general are certainly abundant around the lock and dam before December — the Ira Smith Boat Access area could well be your primary location during those times. Other rarities at Lock & Dam 19 have included Mew, Great Black-backed, and Iceland Gulls; Black-legged Kittiwake; and even a jaeger species. Thayer's Gull is annual, and Glaucous and Lesser Black-backed Gulls are seen from time to time as well. The Ira Smith Boat Access itself, meaning the actual launch, offers a complete view of the spillway and dam, although, like from so many other area locations, the dam is a little far away. However, it is possible to walk above the shoreline from the access to very close below the dam, with a few opportunities to set up along the way.

After crossing the river from Keokuk and exiting the bridge in Illinois, U.S. 136 bends leftward and you will quickly see the overhead crossing lights of the railroad tracks. Just beyond the tracks on the left is an open area with the entrance to the Ira Smith Boat Access, which is not well marked. There is no left turn at this point on U.S. 136, however, so you will have to continue ahead and find a way to return in the opposite lane. Once on the road going into the access area, passing the sign announcing the seasonal closing dates for the eagles, turn right and the boat ramp is where the road opens up into something more like a gravel parking lot. From here, a rough road continues along the river toward the dam. Some of the folks who fish here drive a short way in, but the road gradually deteriorates until it becomes impassable and then nonexistent, and parking is haphazard along the way. You can test for yourself how much of it you want to brave in your particular vehicle, but you might be better off to simply park near the boat ramp and walk in. As you near the dam, the path is neither continuous nor always tidy; at times you will be roughing it through the trees, both standing and fallen.

### Intersection of U.S. 136 and Illinois Hwy. 96

If, while viewing from the Iowa side, you are convinced you have something on the order of a Kelp Gull cruising the dam or roosting on top of it at the Illinois end, and the Ira Smith area is closed, there is a way, somewhat on the desperate side, to get a look

down onto this end, including part of the pool directly above the dam. U.S. 136 and Illinois Hwy. 96 meet in such a way as to form a large, triangular traffic island a little upriver from the Ira Smith entrance. From the stretch of wide, paved shoulder across from the riverward side of this triangle (**Figure 3.4**), there is an open view down onto the dam, although width-wise your field of view is fairly limited. Traffic is heavy here, and it is recommended that you find a safe place to park and walk to this point, despite that there is ample room to pull over onto the shoulder in your car.

### **Lock & Dam and Pool 19 from the Bluffs of Keokuk**

There are several public places up in the bluff-top neighborhoods of Keokuk that offer open and complete views down onto Lock & Dam 19 and the pool immediately above the dam. They are distant views, but depending on your equipment and identification skills, they are reasonably practicable for picking out birds.

From the lock and dam parking area, or from Victory Park, return to Johnson Ave., proceed uphill back to 2nd St., and turn right. (If returning to Keokuk from Hamilton, Illinois, simply turn right on 2nd St. at the end of the bridge.) Follow 2nd St. past the Illinois bridge and uphill into the residential neighborhoods, to the crest at High Street. Continue downhill, and just past Morgan St. the road bends left at a point where there is open viewing down onto the dam (**Figure 3.5**), giving a complete look including the spillway waters. There is just enough room for one car to park along a wide spot here, but if this does not feel comfortable, simply follow the bend up to the next intersection, park along one of the streets, and walk back down.

The bend here is the transition of 2nd St. into Fulton Street. When finished, continue on up Fulton, away from the river, to 5th Street. Turn right on 5th and soon come to a four-way stop, Orleans Avenue. Proceed on the street that goes ahead diagonally and leftward, Grand Ave., rather than making any right-angle turn onto Orleans. Once on Grand Ave., take the first right, 6th St., to its end (a very short section of street) (**Figure 3.6**). Here there is a sweeping, elevated view of the pool directly above the dam, in all its parts. Be assured that this is a public area, despite the somewhat private feel to this narrow spur between two homes.

To scope from still farther upriver in Keokuk, continue on Grand Ave. past 14th St. until you come to a stop sign, with a picturesque neighborhood park in front of you, Rand Park. Continue straight through to the park's entrance lane, which immediately curves toward the river. Stay to the right when you come to a fork, heading instead for the 90-degree left turn in the corner of the park, called "J. A. Finerty Drive." Park along J. A. Finerty Dr. and cross the actual city street just below, Grand Ave., which has no parking, to the strip of grass before the chain-link fence (**Figure 3.7**). There is plenty of room to set up along this strip for scoping down over the river, and the low chain-link fence does not impede your view despite how it first appears from where you parked. Again, this strip is intended for public river viewing, as the park benches will attest.

### **The Great River Road Just Outside of Keokuk**

Shortly upriver from Rand Park there is a turn-out along the Great River Road that has produced some excellent duck species on the river in recent years, including Greater Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, and both White-winged and Black Scoters. Continue along J.

A. Finerty Dr. and exit Rand Park on its upriver side onto 17th St., and turn right. (If you wish to return to U.S. 218, turn left on 17th and follow it seven blocks beyond the park back to Main Street.) Quickly come to a stop sign and turn left onto the Great River Road, which is also Co. Rd. X-28. Shortly along the river, just before a marina, find the modest gravel turn-out from which to scope (**Figure 3.8**). There is another such turn-out about 1.5 miles past the marina. Both offer open viewing of the river.

#### **POOL 19 AT MONTROSE, IOWA**

In Montrose (**Figure 4**) you will be working with the same duck populations as described for Nauvoo, but from the opposite side of the river. The nature of the river between the two towns seems to be such that most of the Iowa side freezes before the Illinois side. (An exception is noted in the first section below.) Consequently, while the duck rafts may be closer to the Illinois shore, any gulls on the ice are better viewed from the Montrose area, and recently a roosting Iceland Gull was identified from this neighborhood. If it is late afternoon on a sunny day, of course, Montrose will offer a better light angle on the ducks, distant or not, than Nauvoo. At the end of the general Montrose section, there are directions for finding your way to the starting point if arriving from Fort Madison.

#### **Co. Rd. X-28/Great River Road, Just Downriver Outside of Montrose**

Continue along the X-28/Great River Road about five miles into Montrose. As you near the town, you will enter a section of wooded bluff (**Figures 4.1 and 5.1**). If the river is especially frozen, there often is still open water with a concentrated duck population down below this bluff and close to the Iowa side (and this population may be present even when there is other open water). Parking is not easy along the almost nonexistent shoulder here, but on the other hand, there are only occasional vehicles. Scoping is through the bare trees — not exactly ideal, but Greater Scaup, White-winged Scoter, and Long-tailed Duck have been identified from this point.

#### **Waterfront in Downtown Montrose**

Fortunately there is more wide-open scoping in Montrose itself. Continue along X-28 and soon the road leaves the woods and drops down into the residential neighborhoods of town. Follow along the natural turns in the road even as the street names change. At the stop sign at Middle Rd., turn right, as indicated by the green Great River Road sign, and continue. When you find yourself facing the grain elevator, continue along the leftward bend. There will be one more rightward bend and then before long you come to a stop sign at Main Street. Turn right and follow Main St. over the railroad tracks down to the river to a small, unnamed waterfront park (**Figures 4.2 and 5.2**). Across the river you will see Nauvoo and its Mormon Temple on a rise. Scan out over the river for duck rafts, which, although perhaps closer to Nauvoo, are still identifiable (sometimes just so). Also look for roosting gulls on the ice, usually upriver. Directions for closer scoping of any such gulls will follow next. Meanwhile, move over to the upriver end of the present parking area and look past the floating restaurant, from its left, for gulls gathered on the ice near shore.



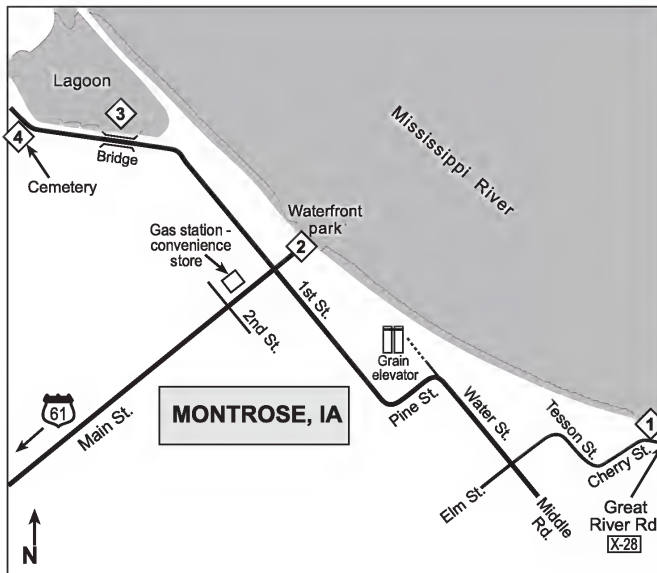


Figure 4. Montrose, Iowa: (1) wooded bluff-side viewing on Great River Road/Co. Rd. X-28, (2) waterfront park in Montrose, (3) lagoon, (4) Montrose Cemetery.

### Points Upriver Outside of Montrose

From the park, turn right on 1st St., the first cross street up from the river. Shortly along the way on 1st St. you will pass a lagoon (**Figure 4.3**) on your right and Montrose Cemetery (**Figure 4.4**) on your left. In winter the cemetery seems to be one of those unlikely spots that consistently produces an interesting bird or two. For example, there is a creek bordering the cemetery to your left as you enter, and Winter Wrens (and even a mid-winter Marsh Wren) have been found here. The cemetery has hosted Eurasian Tree Sparrow as well. The lagoon across from the entrance is also worth checking for dabbling ducks.

The entrance lane to Linger-Longer Rest Area (**Figure 5.3**) is on the right side of 1st St./Great River Road just before it meets U.S. 61, one-half mile from Montrose Cemetery. It offers a slightly elevated spot for river scoping, primarily for gulls on the ice, including what you may have seen close to shore from the waterfront park. There is a plaque here, by the way, commemorating the point where the Mormons crossed the river from Nauvoo to begin their famous trek to Utah, including a curious story involving “quail.” Perhaps more importantly, there is a reliably open restroom as well.

If there are birds still farther upriver you would like to check, enter onto U.S. 61 and go north one-half mile to 280th St., the first right-hand road, at the gas station/convenience store. Follow this road a short way to the river, and where it turns sharply left, park on the short section of abandoned roadway to your right (**Figure 5.4**). There is easy scoping from this elevated point, and you can walk along the very wide shoulder a bit to adjust your view. Although it looks promising, however, there are no further viewing points upriver along this road.

### Starting in Montrose if Arriving from Fort Madison

The turn-off from U.S. 61 onto Great River Rd., which will take you into Montrose, is at the Linger-Longer Rest Area (**Figure 5.3**). Linger-Longer is approximately five miles down from the sharp, southward turn of U.S. 61 just outside of Fort Madison; it is found where U.S. 61 bends rightward. Follow the Great River Rd. one mile to the stop sign at Main Street. (You are now on 1st Street.) At this point you can turn left, to the waterfront park (**Figure 5.2**) described above, or continue on to the bluff-side viewing along Co. Rd. X-28 (**Figure 5.1**), also described above. For the latter, proceed several blocks downriver on 1st St. and then follow the natural curve of the road leftward, where it becomes Pine Street. At Water St., with the grain elevator on your left, turn right. Upon reaching Elm St. after this, turn left following the Great River Rd., and continue following the curves until you leave town and move uphill into the wooded bluffs along the river.

### POOL 19 AT HERON BEND IN IOWA

One and a half miles upriver along U.S. 61 from 280th St. as described above, after mile marker 13, is the entrance to Heron Bend in IA, a Lee County natural area on the river. Alternately, if coming from Fort Madison, Heron Bend is after mile marker 12, about 2.5 miles from the sharp southward turn that U.S. 61 takes just outside of town. Look for a brown wooden sign along Heron Bend's entrance lane reading "Lee County Conservation Board." Follow the gravel lane past this sign and around a leftward turn. Just after passing the conservation board office on your left, take the right-hand turn on the gravel lane, and proceed to its end at the river. At that point on the Mississippi River you are across from the farthest viewing point along Sycamore Haven Dr. outside of Nauvoo.

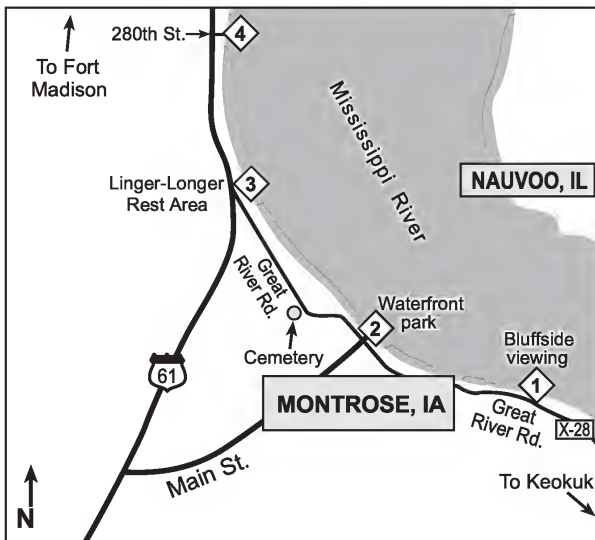


Figure 5. Expanded map of Montrose, Iowa area: (1) wooded bluff-side viewing on Great River Road/Co. Rd. X-28, (2) waterfront park in Montrose, (3) Linger-Longer Rest Area, (4) abandoned roadway on 280th Street along Mississippi River.

### **Fort Madison, if Arriving from the South**

Perhaps you skipped Fort Madison at the beginning of your outing, or you have started the day at Keokuk. To begin at Hall Towing Harbor (**Figure 1.2**) (see Fort Madison section at beginning of essay), enter town from Heron Bend along U.S. 61 (which is joined by Iowa Hwy. 2) and proceed to 20th St., which has a traffic light. The numbered streets are in descending order as you come in from the west, and you will pass a cemetery on your right just before 20th. Turn right and follow 20th St. to its end at the water.

### **POOL 19 AT GREEN BAY TOWNSHIP, IOWA ("COLUSA ELEVATOR" IN IOWA)**

For one last bit of scoping Pool 19 at the end of the day, there is a fairly obscure section of river a little north of Fort Madison, IA and a few miles east off U.S. 61 that consistently has a small population of diving ducks, recently including Greater Scaup and Long-tailed Duck, when much of the rest of Pool 19 is frozen. Follow U.S. 61 about four miles north from the Illinois bridge in Fort Madison to J-50/190th St. on your right, north after mile marker 27. Proceed east toward the river on J-50 about five miles until it ends at X-50/Green Bay Rd. (After the first two miles, J-50's pavement becomes gravel.) Turn right on Green Bay Rd. where you will see a "Dead End" sign. Two miles down this stretch of paved road is the Green Bay boat access, just after the road bends right, and beyond that another of the Colusa Elevator Company's grain elevators. The boat access is worth a look for open water, but usually it is found beyond the elevator. Green Bay Rd. closely hugs the river after the access, and you can easily pull alongside the gravel for scoping. As you look for ducks, you can drive a short distance past the turnoff to the Colusa Elevator Co. Annex (there is a sign), but soon after that the road ends at the private driveway of the house you see up ahead of you.

If snow conditions are right, the back roads throughout this general area, which is flat, bottomland row crop territory, can be very good for longspurs and sometimes Snow Buntings. Eurasian Tree Sparrows have been found in the area of Green Bay Access and the elevator.

Should you want to return to Hwy. 61 going north rather than south, simply stay on X-50/Green Bay Rd. as you return from the elevator, ignoring J-50/190th St., and after about six miles you will emerge just south of Iowa Hwy. 16 near Wever.

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# Clay-colored Sparrows Nesting in Dickinson County

*Embere Hall*

Clay-colored Sparrows (*Spizella pallida*) are relatively uncommon summer residents of Iowa's prairies, pastures and brushy fields. They are drab, secretive birds that have been sporadically observed during the summer months. Most reports are from northwest Iowa with recent observations in Dickinson (Dinsmore 1998), Emmet (Dinsmore 1999), and Hancock counties (Dinsmore 2000). Additional summer sightings have been reported in Cerro Gordo and Story counties (Jackson et al. 1996). While Clay-colored Sparrows have been observed occasionally in Iowa, nesting records are rare. Historically nests have been reported in Kossuth, Winnebago, Jackson, and Emmet counties (DuMont 1933; Anderson 1907). However, only two of these reports provide specific details. One documents several nests in Winnebago County in June 1885. The other describes a nest with four eggs found near Lake Mills in the late 1800s (Anderson 1907).



*Clay-colored Sparrow nest with four eggs on Cayler Prairie, Dickinson Co., late July 2004. Photograph by Ross H. Crandall, Stevens Point, WI.*

While researching grassland bird productivity in northwest Iowa in 2003 and 2004, my field technicians and I located and monitored five Clay-colored Sparrow nests. We found two nests in June 2003 and three in July 2004. Four nests were located on Cayler Prairie, while one nest was located on the Spring Run Complex in Dickinson County. Cayler Prairie is a 160-acre prairie remnant in west-central Dickinson County. Spring Run is a 3,500-acre restored grassland complex in east-central Dickinson County. The complex is a designated Bird Conservation Area.

Clay-colored Sparrow females construct bulky cup nests at the base of tufts of grass or in low shrubs. Nest height varies from ground level to 4.5 feet (Jackson et al. 1996). The eggs are pale blue and are generally spotted or blotched with dark brown on the larger ends (Baicich and Harrison 1997). The nests that we located contained 3–4 eggs. They were built an average of 6.6 inches above the ground in a variety of plants including goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.), leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*), wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*), and buckbrush (*Ceanothus velutinus*). In 2003, young fledged from both nests. In

2004, however, two of the three nests failed. Predation was the most likely cause of nest failure. None of the five nests contained Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) eggs, despite the fact that studies have documented moderate to high rates of Clay-colored Sparrow nest parasitism in other systems (Romig and Crawford 1995; Knapton 1978).

Although it has been suspected for several years that Clay-colored Sparrows nest in Iowa, these nests finally document the presence of a small breeding population. They also demonstrate the use of both native and restored prairie as nesting habitat for this species.

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# Christmas Bird Count Marathon: A Challenging Adventure

Kelly J. McKay

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Program, sponsored by the National Audubon Society, provides some of the few truly long-term data used to document avian population trends. Additionally, with the great number of counts conducted across North America each year, the CBC Program also provides avian population data from a large geographic area. This combination of long-term and large-scale data makes the CBC Program an important source of information for scientifically monitoring avian populations (Arbib 1981; Bock and Root 1981; Drennan 1981; Root 1988; Bibby et al. 1992). Participation in this program is certainly one of the best ways for citizens to contribute to scientific research, and thereby help monitor the health of our avian communities.

I have been participating on CBCs for over two decades. For many years, I have taken my passion and enthusiasm for CBCs to an extreme, by doing 8 to 11 counts each year and compiling seven of these since 1997. During the fall of 2002, I decided to take my CBC participation to the next level — the challenge of doing a CBC marathon. After more than a month of planning and organizing, however, logistical limitations only allowed me to schedule 20 CBCs.

Some of you may have read my article in last year's *American Birds* where I described the adventure of doing a 20-count marathon (McKay 2003). If so, you will recall that I planned an attempt to complete a full 23-count marathon during the 2003–2004 CBC season. I began planning and contacting count compilers throughout a six-state region of the Midwest by early November. After six weeks and seemingly unending hours of telephone and e-mail conversations, not to mention considerable shifting in the scheduling of my counts, I was finally able to successfully schedule 23 CBCs (Table 1).

**14 December (Davenport, IA-IL).** I was joined in the morning by two 15-year-old, first-time CBC counters (Mike Warren and Peter Wood). Weather conditions were perfect to begin this CBC season. The temperature ranged from the mid-20s to the low 30s, and there was little or no wind (0–5 mph). We had an extremely good day, marked by an impressive diversity of 13 waterfowl species. My group identified 64 species and 13,274 individuals (Table 1). Highlights for the day included three Common Redpolls, two White-winged Scoters, and one each of the Greater Scaup and Thayer's Gull. Several common woodland species seemed to be less abundant than usual.

**15 December (Lost Nation, IA).** The temperature was similar to yesterday, but the wind was much stronger (10–20 mph), which produced a biting wind chill. The wind kept birds in cover and made counting difficult. Ryan Schmitz and I formed a field party for this count. Although waterfowl were virtually nonexistent due to the heavy ice cover on the Wapsipinicon River, we still had an outstanding day, recording 50 species and 1,645 individual birds (Table 1). Notable species included two Hermit Thrushes and a single Winter Wren. Upon arriving home, I received a message that the next day's count, scheduled for Bridgeport, WI, had been postponed due to a winter storm predicted for the southern portion of the state. Suddenly, my CBC marathon attempt was in serious jeopardy only three days into the count period. I frantically searched the internet for a

Table 1. Christmas Bird Count 2003–2004 marathon results from author’s field parties<sup>a</sup>

Count Location	Date	Species (N o.)	Individuals (N o.)
Davenport, IL	14-12-03	64	13,274
Lost Nation, IA	15-12-03	50	1,645
Jamaica, IA	16-12-03	49	18,097
Green Island, IA	17-12-03	59	3,088
Clinton, IL	18-12-03	58	8,843
Western Mercer County, IL	19-12-03	47	2,382
Cedar Rapids, IA	20-12-03	59	2,505
Lake Red Rock, IA	21-12-03	48	26,287
Keokuk, IA	22-12-03	62	17,460
Princeton-Camanche, IL	23-12-03	60	5,417
Van Patten, IL	24-12-03	52	3,975
Chicago Lakefront, IL	25-12-03	27	4,047
Montello, WI	26-12-03	45	1,918
Lake Chautauqua NW R, IL	27-12-03	65	3,164
Illini State Park, IL	28-12-03	57	6,938
Horseshoe Lake, IL	29-12-03	71	6,785
Union County, IL	30-12-03	74	24,940
Mermet Lake, IL	31-12-03	90	32,068
Jackson County, IL	01-01-04	69	51,621
Adams County, WI	02-01-04	30	501
North Linn, IA	03-01-04	38	2,104
Muscatine, IL	04-01-04	52	1,869
Andalusia, IL	05-01-04	56	2,295
TOTAL		132	241,223

<sup>a</sup> The field parties with whom the author worked were located in Illinois (IL), Iowa (IA), or Wisconsin (WI).

replacement count. I finally found one in Jamaica! I know what you are thinking, but unfortunately this Jamaica is in central Iowa.

**16 December (Jamaica, IA).** Half way to the count circle I encountered the winter storm that had been predicted. Snow and ice squalls left Interstate 80 ice covered and extremely treacherous. To make matters worse, sustained wind of 40 mph, which continued all day, left many of the roadways drifted over with snow and impassable. The temperature, which never escaped the mid-20s, created severe wind chills. I spent the day working with Ray Cummins and Tom Johnson. Once again, the high wind kept birds holding tight in cover and made counting difficult. Nevertheless, our group did have a good day observing 49 species and 18,097 individuals (Table 1). However, 15,000 of these were Canada Geese. Other noteworthy birds included a single Northern Goshawk, 92 Ring-necked Pheasants, and three Western Meadowlarks. By the way, southern Wisconsin received less than an inch of snow.

**17 December (Green Island, IA-IL).** I joined Ulf Konig for this day. After yesterday’s extreme winter weather, today was much better. Although the temperature only reached the upper 20s, the wind (5–15 mph) lessened throughout the day. The milder conditions left me feeling rejuvenated, and the bird activity greatly increased. As a result, our group had an excellent day recording 59 species and 3,088 individual birds (Table 1).

This count produced a number of highlights such as 35 Tundra Swans, four Winter Wrens, three Hermit Thrushes, a single Brewer's Blackbird, and 59 Purple Finches.

**18 December (Clinton, IA-IL).** Ryan Schmitz and I once again formed a field party. We encountered periodic snow showers during the predawn hours. After sunrise, the snow ended and the temperature ranged from the upper 20s to the low 30s during the day, with light to moderate wind (5–15 mph). Ten species of waterfowl allowed our group to have a very impressive day. We identified 58 species and recorded 8,843 total birds (Table 1). This CBC yielded a paradox of birds including four Yellow-rumped Warblers and six Snow Buntings. Additionally, we observed five each of the Rough-legged Hawk and Northern Harrier, while gulls were extremely scarce within the circle.

**19 December (Western Mercer County, IL-IA).** I met the rest of my field party (Steve Hager and Brad Cosentino), to continue the drive to this CBC circle. A fairly strong wind (15–25 mph) persisted all day, along with falling temperatures that never exceeded the upper 20s. A substantial wind chill and significant ice cover on most water bodies, kept birds deep in cover and left waterfowl and gulls almost completely absent from this circle. These conditions produced a disappointing count, with only 47 species and 2,382 individuals being recorded (Table 1). The only notable birds included 14 Northern Bobwhites and 100 Eurasian Tree Sparrows.

**20 December (Cedar Rapids, IA).** During the first half of the day I worked alone, joining Weir Nelson and Ken Kadlec in the early afternoon. The weather during this count was seasonably cold with temperatures ranging from the low 10s to low 20s and light to moderate wind (0–15 mph). Bird activity was high during this CBC, despite the seasonably cold weather. My group recorded a very diverse 59 species and 2,505 total birds (Table 1). Among the highlights were single individuals of the Double-crested Cormorant, Pied-billed Grebe, and Long-eared Owl, along with two Black-crowned Night-Herons, and three Carolina Wrens. However, common woodland species were present in decreased numbers.

**21 December (Lake Red Rock, IA).** Jay Gilliam and I formed a field party for the day. Relatively strong wind (5–25 mph) and unseasonably mild temperatures (low 30s to upper 40s) characterized this CBC. Regardless of the decent waterfowl and gull diversity present on the lake, my group had a fairly disappointing day, tallying only 48 species and 26,287 individuals (Table 1). Although an impressive number of birds were observed, 17,820 were Ring-billed Gulls and 5,100 were Canada Geese. Other noteworthy species included 83 Bald Eagles, three Thayer's Gulls, and two Glaucous Gulls.

**22 December (Keokuk, IA).** For the first time during this marathon, I worked alone all day. The temperature was once again extremely mild ranging from the mid-30s to the upper 40s, while little or no wind (0–5 mph) occurred. However, a steady and sometimes heavy rain began in the late morning and continued through the remainder of the day. Nevertheless, bird activity was noticeably higher all day, and I had a very good count. Overall, I observed 62 species and 17,460 individual birds (Table 1), of which 12 species were waterfowl. A number of avian highlights characterized the day including 6,445 Canvasbacks, 36 Redheads, 4,630 Ring-necked Ducks, two American White Pelicans, and a single Lincoln's Sparrow. Furthermore, passerine response to the Eastern Screech-Owl tape was phenomenal all day.

**23 December (Princeton-Camanche, IA-IL).** For the second day in a row, I worked alone. The weather for this count was seasonable, with temperatures in the upper 20s to

mid-30s and wind ranging from 5–20 mph. Once again, passerine response to the owl tape was excellent. As a result, I had another remarkable day tallying 60 species and 5,417 individuals (Table 1). Similar to yesterday, fair waterfowl diversity (11 species) was present within the circle. This CBC also yielded a number of noteworthy finds such as four Trumpeter Swans, two White-winged Scoters, 16 Northern Bobwhites, 113 Wild Turkeys, 120 Bald Eagles, and two Eurasian Tree Sparrows (one of the most northerly records).

**24–31 December through 1–2 January.** I spent this time period doing CBCs in Illinois and Wisconsin. (See Table 1 for details.) On 24 December, Steve Hager and Ryan Schmitz joined me in Van Petten, IL. The best encounter of the day, by far, was three Short-eared Owls perched on fence posts and observed as the sun was setting on this beautiful Christmas Eve. Christmas Day was spent with Joel Greenberg on the Chicago Lakefront, an inner city area with very little natural habitat. We found a couple of small landscape plantings of prairie grass (maybe 15 feet long by 3 feet wide). Within these scraps of habitat, there were two Song, two Swamp, and six White-throated Sparrows that simply would not leave the grass, despite the number of people disturbing them.

Other counts during this period were Montello, WI (my 193rd CBC and first in Wisconsin) with Bill Brooks; Lake Chautauqua NWR, IL with Angella and Dan Moorehouse; Illini State Park with Ken Wysocki and John Duran; Horseshoe Lake, IL with Catherine Bland; Union County, IL with Steve Dinsmore; Mermet Lake, IL-KY with Catherine Bland; Jackson County, IL with Catherine Bland, Vicki Lang, and Steve Juhlin; and Adams County, WI with Eric Howe. New Year's Eve was spent at Cathie and Lou Hutcheson's home in southern Illinois. They graciously put us up for the night and provided a delicious meal and wonderful southern Illinois hospitality!

**3 January (North Linn, IA).** I joined a field party consisting of Weir Nelson, Ken Kadlec, and Diana Pesek. A strong winter storm was approaching Iowa from the west. Consequently, the temperature dropped all day from the low 30s to the low 20s. The 5–15 mph wind created a biting wind chill, which along with the falling thermometer, kept birds in cover all day and made counting very difficult. As a result, my group had a poor day, observing only 38 species and 2,104 individuals (Table 1). Few noteworthy birds were encountered, including very few waterfowl. Interesting finds involved four Rough-legged Hawks, 292 Cedar Waxwings, and 12 White-throated Sparrows.

**4 January (Muscatine, IA-IL).** Although I was nearing the successful completion of this CBC marathon, the last couple of days were not going to go easily. A major winter storm moved in overnight and continued through the entire day. Frigid temperatures (low to mid-20s) and moderately strong wind (10–20 mph), along with eight inches of snow, created extremely difficult conditions with many roads drifted closed. Furthermore, most birds held tight in cover through the day. Lindsay Maess, another first time Christmas counter, joined me in these brutal conditions. Amazingly, however, we had a very good day tallying 52 species and recording 1,869 individual birds (Table 1). Nine species of waterfowl definitely helped. The only notable finds involved two Green-winged Teal, one Northern Shrike, two Hermit Thrushes, and four Yellow-rumped Warblers.

**5 January (Andalusia, IL-IA).** Catherine Bland and I once again formed a field party for this CBC marathon finale. The winter storm was over, leaving in its wake very cold temperatures (low to mid-teens) and light to moderate wind (10–15 mph) that produced a substantial wind chill. Regardless of the weather conditions, bird activity was good and we had a great day to conclude this 23-count CBC epic. My group identified 56 species



and 2,295 individual birds (Table 1). Many of the common woodland species, however, remained relatively scarce. The highlights of this final CBC included 124 Horned Larks, a single Winter Wren and Northern Mockingbird, and 12 Lapland Longspurs. As I was driving home at the end of the day, I couldn't wait until next year and began to wonder what sort of CBC challenge I would undertake next.

## SUMMARY

During the course of completing these 23 counts, my field parties identified a total of 132 species and recorded 241,223 individual birds (Tables 1 and 2). The 10 most abundant species encountered included Red-winged Blackbird (46,054), Common Grackle (39,895), Canada Goose (29,054), Ring-billed Gull (24,345), European Starling (12,658), Mallard (11,945), Snow Goose (9,372), Ring-necked Duck (8,960), Common Goldeneye (8,646), and Canvasback (6,495) (Table 2). These 10 species accounted for 81.8% of all identified birds. I participated on 14 counts in Illinois, seven in Iowa, and two in Wisconsin (Table 1). My groups recorded 120 species and 167,618 birds in Illinois, 93 species and 71,186 birds in Iowa, and 51 species and 2,419 birds in Wisconsin (Table 2). Only six species were observed on all 23 counts (Rock Pigeon, Downy Woodpecker, American Crow, European Starling, American Tree Sparrow, and House Sparrow), while 25 species were recorded on all seven counts in Iowa (Table 2). Six species of birds (Tundra Swan, American White Pelican, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Glaucous Gull, Western Meadowlark, and Brewer's Blackbird) were only encountered on Iowa CBCs (Table 2).

During the course of this 23-day adventure, I logged 360 hours traveling 7,100.25 miles (including travel time and miles, as well as daily compilation time) (Table 3). Consequently, my total effort per count averaged 309 miles and 15.7 hours. By comparison, I spent 92.75 hours traveling 4,829 miles to and from counts, and 267.25 hours (2,271.25 miles) actually counting birds (Table 3), and few hours sleeping. With the successful accomplishment of a complete CBC marathon, I am now actively soliciting ideas from other birders and Christmas counters on a new CBC challenge. If anyone has a suggestion, please drop me an e-mail.

Completing the full 23-count marathon, establishes a new all-time record for the number of CBCs conducted by a single person in one year (breaking my record last year of 20 counts). I greatly enjoyed working and collecting data with so many old friends and new acquaintances. I carried away from this marathon countless memorable moments and experiences, and thank all the dedicated birders with whom I had the privilege of working. A CBC marathon is certainly a grueling endeavor, and not for everyone. However, we definitely need as much information as possible regarding avian population trends to better understand and make informed management decisions concerning the health and status of our avian communities. Consequently, it is my hope that reading this article will inspire more people to actively participate and contribute data to the CBC Program. In the years to come, I believe that citizen scientists will play an increasingly important role in the wildlife research and monitoring that is absolutely necessary if we are going to protect and preserve the earth's biodiversity.



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Table 2. Cumulative species identified and total number of individuals recorded during the 2003-2004 Christmas Bird Count marathon

Species <sup>a</sup>	Total CBC No. <sup>b</sup> (Ind. <sup>c</sup> )	IL CBC (Ind.)	IA CBC (Ind.)	WI CBC (Ind.)
Gr.W hite-fronted Goose	5 (1,170)	4 (1,166)	1 (4)	—
Snow Goose	5 (9,372)	4 (9,297)	1 (75)	—
Ross's Goose	3 (57)	3 (57)	—	—
Canada Goose	22 (29,054)	14 (7,460)	7 (21,174)	1 (420)
Mute Swan	1 (4)	—	—	1 (4)
Trumpeter Swan	3 (9)	2 (8)	1 (1)	—
Tundra Swan	1 (35)	—	1 (35)	—
Wood Duck	6 (40)	5 (39)	1 (1)	—
Gadwall	15 (427)	11 (339)	4 (88)	—
American W igeon	6 (295)	4 (276)	2 (19)	—
American Black Duck	13 (45)	9 (29)	3 (7)	1 (9)
Mallard	22 (11,945)	14 (10,097)	7 (1,560)	1 (288)
N orthern Shoveler	4 (82)	4 (82)	—	—
N orthern Pintail	4 (25)	4 (25)	—	—
Green-winged Teal	4 (11)	4 (11)	—	—
Canvasback	6 (6,495)	5 (50)	1 (6,445)	—
Redhead	5 (44)	3 (7)	2 (37)	—
Ring-necked Duck	9 (8,960)	6 (4,325)	3 (4,635)	—
Greater Scaup	1 (1)	1 (1)	—	—
Lesser Scaup	10 (1,512)	7 (810)	3 (702)	—
W hite-winged Scoter	2 (4)	2 (4)	—	—

Table 2 (continued)

Species <sup>a</sup>	Total CBC No. <sup>b</sup> (Ind. <sup>c</sup> )	IL CBC (Ind.)	IA CBC (Ind.)	WI CBC (Ind.)
Bufflehead	5 (41)	4 (29)	1 (12)	—
Common Goldeneye	14 (8,646)	10 (6,186)	4 (2,460)	—
Hooded Merganser	11 (78)	7 (44)	4 (34)	—
Common Merganser	13 (3,758)	9 (2,735)	4 (1,023)	—
Red-breasted Merganser	1 (93)	1 (93)	—	—
Ruddy Duck	3 (12)	3 (12)	—	—
Ring-necked Pheasant	10 (120)	4 (11)	6 (109)	—
Greater Prairie-Chicken	1 (25)	—	—	1 (25)
Wild Turkey	12 (262)	6 (179)	5 (35)	1 (48)
Northern Bobwhite	6 (51)	5 (44)	1 (7)	—
Common Loon	1 (1)	1 (1)	—	—
Pied-billed Grebe	2 (2)	1 (1)	1 (1)	—
American White Pelican	1 (2)	—	1 (2)	—
Double-crested Cormorant	5 (17)	4 (16)	1 (1)	—
Great Blue Heron	12 (166)	10 (163)	2 (3)	—
Black-crown. Night-Heron	1 (2)	—	1 (2)	—
Black Vulture	1 (9)	1 (9)	—	—
Turkey Vulture	2 (11)	2 (11)	—	—
Bald Eagle	21 (699)	13 (468)	7 (227)	1 (4)
Northern Harrier	11 (26)	7 (17)	4 (9)	—
Sharp-shinned Hawk	11 (14)	7 (8)	3 (4)	1 (2)
Cooper's Hawk	9 (13)	7 (11)	1 (1)	1 (1)
Northern Goshawk	2 (2)	—	1 (1)	1 (1)
Red-shouldered Hawk	6 (29)	5 (28)	1 (1)	—
Red-tailed Hawk	22 (242)	13 (126)	7 (103)	2 (13)
Rough-legged Hawk	15 (37)	7 (13)	6 (13)	2 (11)
Golden Eagle	2 (2)	2 (2)	—	—
American Kestrel	22 (101)	14 (72)	7 (27)	1 (2)
Merlin	2 (2)	—	—	2 (2)
American Coot	7 (91)	5 (82)	2 (9)	—
Killdeer	6 (43)	5 (42)	1 (1)	—
Wilson's Snipe	3 (6)	2 (5)	1 (1)	—
American Woodcock	1 (1)	1 (1)	—	—
Ring-billed Gull	19 (24,345)	14 (5,489)	4 (18,840)	1 (16)
Herring Gull	16 (2,250)	10 (1,445)	4 (694)	2 (111)
Thayer's Gull	6 (10)	4 (6)	2 (4)	—
Glaucous Gull	1 (2)	—	1 (2)	—
Rock Pigeon	23 (1,340)	14 (933)	7 (362)	2 (45)
Mourning Dove	21 (1,329)	13 (988)	7 (264)	1 (77)
Monk Parakeet	1 (24)	1 (24)	—	—
Eastern Screech-Owl	18 (38)	9 (22)	7 (14)	2 (2)
Great Horned Owl	19 (76)	11 (41)	6 (27)	2 (8)
Barred Owl	18 (40)	10 (24)	6 (14)	2 (2)
Long-eared Owl	6 (7)	1 (1)	4 (5)	1 (1)
Short-eared Owl	1 (3)	1 (3)	—	—
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1 (1)	1 (1)	—	—
Belted Kingfisher	15 (39)	9 (20)	5 (16)	1 (3)
Red-headed Woodpecker	18 (123)	12 (82)	5 (40)	1 (1)
Red-bellied Woodpecker	22 (406)	13 (240)	7 (154)	2 (12)

Table 2 (continued)

Species <sup>a</sup>	Total CBC No. <sup>b</sup> (Ind. <sup>c</sup> )	IL CBC (Ind.)	IA CBC (Ind.)	WI CBC (Ind.)
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	12 (14)	8 (10)	3 (3)	1 (1)
Downy Woodpecker	23 (519)	14 (293)	7 (203)	2 (23)
Hairy Woodpecker	22 (148)	13 (93)	7 (49)	2 (6)
Northern Flicker	22 (354)	13 (233)	7 (116)	2 (5)
Pileated Woodpecker	14 (50)	9 (40)	4 (6)	1 (4)
Loggerhead Shrike	1 (3)	1 (3)	—	—
Northern Shrike	5 (5)	4 (4)	—	1 (1)
Blue Jay	22 (1,426)	13 (788)	7 (508)	2 (130)
American Crow	23 (3,011)	14 (1,581)	7 (1,247)	2 (183)
Common Raven	1 (6)	—	—	1 (6)
Horned Lark	16 (730)	12 (670)	4 (60)	—
Carolina Chickadee	4 (243)	4 (243)	—	—
Black-capped Chickadee	19 (1,139)	10 (501)	7 (499)	2 (139)
Tufted Titmouse	18 (335)	12 (247)	6 (88)	—
Red-breasted Nuthatch	4 (8)	—	2 (2)	2 (6)
White-breasted Nuthatch	22 (547)	13 (319)	7 (185)	2 (43)
Brown Creeper	20 (87)	13 (57)	6 (29)	1 (1)
Carolina Wren	13 (134)	9 (119)	4 (15)	—
Winter Wren	10 (19)	6 (12)	4 (7)	—
Marsh Wren	1 (1)	1 (1)	—	—
Golden-crowned Kinglet	10 (33)	9 (32)	1 (1)	—
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	5 (27)	5 (27)	—	—
Eastern Bluebird	10 (188)	7 (156)	3 (32)	—
Hermit Thrush	10 (23)	8 (18)	2 (5)	—
American Robin	13 (2,382)	8 (2,248)	4 (128)	1 (6)
Gray Catbird	1 (1)	1 (1)	—	—
Northern Mockingbird	4 (17)	4 (17)	—	—
Brown Thrasher	3 (6)	3 (6)	—	—
European Starling	23 (12,658)	14 (8,795)	7 (3,739)	2 (124)
Cedar Waxwing	17 (674)	10 (200)	6 (455)	1 (19)
Yellow-rumped Warbler	10 (61)	8 (53)	2 (8)	—
Common Yellowthroat	1 (1)	1 (1)	—	—
Eastern Towhee	3 (10)	3 (10)	—	—
American Tree Sparrow	23 (1,505)	14 (914)	7 (543)	2 (48)
Field Sparrow	4 (67)	4 (67)	—	—
Vesper Sparrow	1 (1)	1 (1)	—	—
Savannah Sparrow	1 (1)	1 (1)	—	—
Fox Sparrow	7 (23)	7 (23)	—	—
Song Sparrow	20 (450)	14 (416)	6 (34)	—
Lincoln's Sparrow	2 (2)	1 (1)	1 (1)	—
Swamp Sparrow	16 (137)	12 (129)	4 (8)	—
White-throated Sparrow	20 (839)	13 (801)	7 (38)	—
White-crowned Sparrow	7 (145)	7 (145)	—	—
Dark-eyed Junco	22 (2,281)	13 (1,475)	7 (709)	2 (97)
Lapland Longspur	10 (62)	8 (53)	2 (9)	—
Snow Bunting	2 (8)	2 (8)	—	—
Northern Cardinal	22 (1,747)	13 (935)	7 (799)	2 (13)
Indigo Bunting	1 (5)	1 (5)	—	—
Red-winged Blackbird	17 (46,054)	11 (45,816)	5 (232)	1 (6)

Table 2 (continued)

Species <sup>a</sup>	Total CBC No. <sup>b</sup> (Ind. <sup>c</sup> )	IL CBC (Ind.)	IA CBC (Ind.)	WI CBC (Ind.)
Eastern Meadowlark	3 (114)	3 (114)	—	—
Western Meadowlark	1 (3)	—	1 (3)	—
Meadowlark sp. <sup>d</sup>	2 (31)	2 (31)	—	—
Rusty Blackbird	9 (440)	8 (436)	1 (4)	—
Brewer's Blackbird	1 (1)	—	1 (1)	—
Common Grackle	9 (39,895)	7 (39,892)	2 (3)	—
Brown-headed Cowbird	12 (2,149)	9 (2,127)	3 (22)	—
Purple Finch	17 (241)	8 (74)	7 (121)	2 (46)
House Finch	20 (503)	12 (350)	7 (86)	1 (67)
Common Redpoll	4 (156)	3 (7)	—	1 (149)
Pine Siskin	4 (5)	2 (2)	1 (1)	1 (2)
American Goldfinch	22 (482)	13 (272)	7 (163)	2 (47)
House Sparrow	23 (4,591)	14 (2,794)	7 (1,658)	2 (139)
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	5 (201)	4 (140)	1 (61)	—
<b>TOTAL SPECIES (Ind.)</b>	<b>132 (241,223)</b>	<b>120 (167,618)</b>	<b>93 (71,186)</b>	<b>51 (2,419)</b>

<sup>a</sup> Species taxonomic order and nomenclature follows the American Ornithologists' Union (2003) and Illinois Ornithological Society (1999).

<sup>b</sup> Number of Christmas Bird Counts on which a species was seen.

<sup>c</sup> Number of individuals of each species.

<sup>d</sup> Not identified to species and therefore not counted in the species total.

Table 3. Specific statistics for the 2003–2004 CBC marathon

Total hours	360
Total miles	7,100.25
Hours driven en route	92.75
Miles driven en route	4,829
Hours counting birds	267.25
Miles counting birds	2,271.25

# Swallow-tailed Kite over Iowa City

*James E. Scheib*



*Figure 1. Swallow-tailed Kite in Iowa City, Johnson Co., 3 June 2004. Photograph by James E. Scheib, Iowa City, IA.*

At 10:45 AM on Thursday, 3 June 2004, I was talking with a neighbor two houses up the street when I spotted a black-pointed wing-tip over nearby trees. I knew at once that it was nothing I recognized from the area and kept watching for more of the bird to appear. About 30 seconds later it floated out over the trees. I quickly ruled out a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, and then realized it was a Swallow-tailed Kite, which I had seen in Florida and was unmistakable for any

experienced birder. I yelled the discovery at the neighbor and then ran down the street with the dog in tow, grabbed the camera from the kitchen table, and took a couple of quick shots (Figure 1) for the IOU Records Committee before calling Karole and Jim Fuller down the street. Jim and Karole came up the hill, got good looks, and then Jim hustled back down the hill. After he had added the bird to their yard list he put the sighting on the IA-Bird chat list shortly after 11 AM.

For the next three days my time was spent keeping an eye out for the kite. By 2 PM that same day the Armstrongs had arrived from west of Des Moines and in short order had seen the bird from our yard on Longview Knoll, 1.5 miles north of I-80 off Dubuque Street in Iowa City. The kite reappeared repeatedly at tree top level hunting and feeding on insects throughout the day. Many times it was viewed coming in from the north near the upper pond off Lakeview Drive. At 3:00 PM a neighbor on Lakeview called the Fullers to say she had seen a Swallow-tailed Kite and had identified it from a bird book. On Thursday, 3 June, the last sighting of the day was at 4:50 PM. Local birders who gathered in the evening did not see it then but those who returned early the next morning did.

The second day it was more frequent in the morning than the afternoon but the Allens did see it in the afternoon after waiting several hours. My wife, Sharon, left work in mid-morning for a few minutes hoping to see it and as she drove down the street toward me I pointed up to the kite, which she had already spotted as she turned off Dubuque Street. Through 4:41 PM of the second day, all who came saw the bird either on Longview Knoll or at the pond off Lakeview Drive. Jay Gilliam and Chaiyan Kasornrorkbua got some great photos at the pond Friday morning on their way east to see the Kirtland's Warbler in Michigan. They have great photography equipment and it shows in the quality of their photos (see front cover photo by Jay Gilliam). Thanks to Jim Fuller, Joe Wilkinson of the DNR, Diana Pesek of *The Gazette* in Cedar Rapids, and me,



the Friday, 4 June 2004 issue of *The Gazette* carried a short article and photograph on the front page of the sports section.

Based on the fact that the kite was considered a day migrant and that it had been seen after 4 PM on Friday, I was confident that it would still be in the vicinity on Saturday but it was not found despite constant coverage of both primary sites.

The Swallow-tailed Kite winters in South America and summers in the United States in coastal areas from Texas to South Carolina and in the tropics. A rehabilitated bird was tracked migrating south through Central America to central Brazil. Most of its food is gathered on the wing, including lizards from trees. It eats in the air and drinks while skimming the surface of ponds, lakes, and marshes. It has nested as far north as Minnesota but its present range is greatly decreased due to shooting and habitat destruction. Its genus *Elanoides* contains but one species: *Elanoides forficatus*, once known as the Fork-tailed Kite.

This appearance was only the third in Iowa since 1931, the others being 14–15 May 1992 at Cedar Falls in Black Hawk County and 14–15 September 2000 in Cerro Gordo County. This bird upheld the “recent” tradition of two-day stays in Iowa. Other recent northern appearances of single Swallow-tailed Kites were 6 June 1999, 7 and 10 May 2000 in Massachusetts; 6–19 August 2002 in Michigan; 26 May 2000 and 11 August 2002 in Minnesota; 8 August 2001 in Nova Scotia; and for a few days in May 2000 (last reported 10 May) at Point Pelee, Ontario.

#### REFERENCES

- Kent, T. H. 2004. Updates to *Birds in Iowa*. <<http://home.mchsi.com/~thkbirds/>>  
Kent, T. H. and J. J. Dinsmore. 1996. *Birds in Iowa*. Published by the authors, Iowa City and Ames, IA.  
North American Bird Information Web Site. 2004. *Swallow-tailed Kite Data*. <[www.birdinfo.com/Swallow-tailedKite\\_data.html](http://www.birdinfo.com/Swallow-tailedKite_data.html)> (13 May 2004)

10 Longview Knoll N.E., Iowa City, IA 52240-9148 (jim@tenlongview.net)

## Iowa Ornithologists' Union Fall Business Meeting 2004

*25 September 2004*

The IOU fall business meeting was held at the Wickiup Hill Nature Area near Cedar Rapids. Vice President Sharon Stilwell called the meeting to order at 3:15 PM. In attendance were Richard Tetrault, president; Sharon Stilwell, vice president; Tammy Hertzell, treasurer; board members Jay Gilliam, John Rutenbeck, Sue Spieker, Linda Zaletel, and Ric Zarwell; and members of the organization.

**Secretary's Report.** The minutes were approved as published in *IBL* 74(2).

**Treasurer's Report.** Tammy Hertzelt reviewed the information on pages 83–85 of the spring 2004 *IBL* 74(2), and then provided a Statement of Cash Flows for the period of 1 Jan through 22 Sep 2004. The statement indicated that our current assets were \$61,627.71 and that our net surplus for the period was \$562.65. Linda Zaletel moved and Ric Zarwell seconded to accept the treasurer's report. All ayes, motion carried.

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Membership Committee Report.** John Rutenbeck reported that the committee met on 29 Aug in Iowa City. Registrar Dave Edwards reported to them that 69% of the members five years ago remained members, a good retention rate. They also reviewed the committee's bylaws, and will recommend changes at the business meeting. The traveling display was updated, including the removal of European Stork photo and the bird line reference.

Activities suggested to increase membership included promotional events, use of meeting announcement posters, invitation of outdoor writers to meetings, distribution of membership brochures to CBC compilers, and continued presence at events such as the Polk County Pelican Festival.

**Conservation Committee.** Jay Gilliam reported that the committee was proposing that its name be changed to Projects Committee because that more accurately describes its function. In addition to recommending projects to be financially supported by the IOU, it will monitor the results of prior projects. It will also recommend that its status be changed from ad hoc to standing, requiring amending the constitution. As required, the proposed change will be published in *IBL*. There was discussion regarding the original purpose of the committee, and whether this change reflected that purpose. It was noted that this committee had intermittently existed over the years, and that its function had changed.

**Publications Committee.** Ann Johnson thanked everyone for registering on-line through <[www.iowabirds.org](http://www.iowabirds.org)>. *IBL* editor Kay Niyo reported that there is a 15 Oct deadline for submission of articles for the upcoming fall issue, and that she can always use articles. *IOU News* editor Paul Hertzelt reported that the newsletter was on schedule and on budget. Mark Proescholdt thanked Kay and Paul for their excellent work.

**Records Committee.** Ann Johnson reported that a meeting was scheduled for mid-October and that the report for 2003 was in the summer 2004 *IBL* 74(3). A new checklist will be developed following the completion of the 2004 records, although rapidly changing taxonomic status quickly renders checklists obsolete.

**Travel Committee.** Ric Zarwell reported that the June trip to see the Kirtland's Warbler was successful, and that 12 or 13 persons participated. The next official trip will be to the Rivers and Bluffs Fall Birding Festival on 12–14 Nov in Lansing. A sign-up sheet was available at the meeting to determine interest in possible trips to Minnesota, California, and other locations. It is hoped that four to six trips can be offered annually, including trips in Iowa, the lower 48 states, and outside the United States.

#### OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

#### NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

It was announced that the spring 2005 meeting will be in Indianola on 13–15 May. A location for the fall 2005 meeting was still being sought.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Rick Hollis moved and Linda Zaletel seconded that the meeting be adjourned. All ayes, motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Robert I. Cecil, secretary

## Board Meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

*26 September 2004*

The IOU board meeting was held at F. W. Kent Park in Johnson County. President Richard Tetrault called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM. In attendance were Richard Tetrault; president, Sharon Stilwell, vice president; Tammy Hertzell, treasurer; board members Jay Gilliam, John Rutenbeck, Sue Spieker, Linda Zaletel, Ric Zarwell; and a few members of the organization.

**Secretary's Report.** The minutes were approved as published in *IBL* 74(2).

**Treasurer's Report.** Tammy Hertzell reported that she would like direction from the board regarding funds in savings accounts and Certificates of Deposit (CDs) that mature and need to be reinvested, adding that the interest rate of two of the CDs can be bumped up while another is invested at a fixed rate. President Tetrault discussed other investment options, such as mutual fund companies like Vanguard, Fidelity, or T. Rowe Price, noting that they offer safety, accessibility, and a higher rate of return when compared to CDs. Tammy Hertzell agreed to research such instruments. Due to the expiration of a 10 October CD, Linda Zaletel moved and Ric Zarwell seconded that \$10,000 from the checking account be combined with the proceeds of the CD and renewed for nine months by which time mutual funding options will have been evaluated. It was discussed whether this would leave adequate cash to handle upcoming expenses. Because membership revenues were anticipated, it appeared that it would. All ayes, motion carried.

Tammy Hertzelt requested budget proposals from the committees, and noted that she would contact them. It was also decided that there would be a board meeting prior to the end of the year.

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Conservation Committee.** Jay Gilliam requested that the name of the committee be changed from conservation to projects. Linda Zaletel moved and Sharon Stilwell seconded that the name Conservation Committee be changed to Projects Committee. There was a brief discussion on the functions of the committee. President Tetrault requested that the number of members be increased from four to five and that membership be staggered, similar to the Records Committee. All ayes, motion carried.

**Publications and Records Committees.** Ann Johnson reported that Tom Kent resigned from the Publications Committee and that Neil Bernstein has agreed to serve. Bob Cecil moved and Ric Zarwell seconded that Neil Bernstein be approved. All ayes, motion carried.

**Travel Committee.** Ric Zarwell reported good interest in trips as reflected by the sign-up sheets at the meeting, and hoped to have four or five trips each year. Sharon Stilwell suggested that there should be standard policies regarding payment, refunds, cancellations, etc. Ric Zarwell indicated that he would like a standing committee to address these and other issues, but Ann Johnson disagreed, stating that an ad hoc group could handle policy development and that a single person could handle administrative duties. Ric Zarwell will have proposed policies for the next board meeting. President Tetrault expressed his desire that two or three trips be offered prior to the spring meeting.

There was discussion regarding whether non-IOU members would pay a premium for participation in IOU trips. It was agreed that they would, and that while membership would be the most economical way to participate, membership would not be required.

**Library/Historical Committee.** Hank Zaletel reported that, in response to the president's request, he had investigated bequests to the IOU. A search of records back to 1960 revealed that seven bequests had been received ranging from \$10 to \$10,000. He also presented six recommendations for responding to new bequests and for encouraging new ones. Ric Zarwell suggested that we immediately recognize bequests in a publication when they are received. A recent bequest was acknowledged with a personal letter by President Tetrault.

**Membership Committee.** John Rutenbeck reviewed the proposed bylaw changes and requested their approval. President Tetrault received clarification that Membership Committee terms are staggered. Tammy Hertzelt asked about the structure of the committee and questioned whether the treasurer should be on it. Linda Zaletel moved and Sue Spieker seconded that the words "one of whom is the Treasurer of the Union and" be stricken from Point 1 of the section on Membership Committee structure, leaving "The committee shall consist of up to seven members, one of whom is the registrar." All ayes, motion carried. It was pointed out that Point 2 of the same section also references the treasurer, and for consistency, should also be deleted. Linda Zaletel moved and Sharon

Stilwell seconded that the words "The Treasurer's term is set by the Constitution and" be stricken from Point 2 of the section, leaving "The Board of Directors sets the Registrar's term..." All ayes, motion carried. It was then moved by Sharon Stilwell and seconded by Ric Zarwell that the bylaws be accepted as amended. All ayes, motion carried.

#### OLD BUSINESS

**Insurance.** Ross Silcock was unable to attend the meeting to explain the insurance policy but plans to attend the spring 2005 meeting. Key excerpts of the policy are on the officer's section of the IOU website.

#### NEW BUSINESS

President Tetrault announced that he will appoint a Nominating Committee very soon, and that Bill Barker will represent the IOU at the 2005 Birding Symposium in Davenport.

Sharon Stilwell suggested that we make funds available for the publication of checklists and that they be printed as soon as possible after the completion of work by the Records Committee. It was decided that the Publication Committee has the authority to publish the checklists.

Tammy Hertzell has reviewed the constitution and suggested that it should be reviewed by the board because some sections seem to be obsolete. She also requested that the Audit Committee be appointed and activated. President Tetrault indicated that he would serve and that he would ask Judy Garton to serve as well. A third member would be selected by him.

*IBL* Editor Kay Niyo inquired about archiving IOU materials. Hank Zaletel said that the information should be given to him and that he would take it to the archives at Iowa State University.

**Adjournment.** Bob Cecil moved and Sharon Stilwell seconded that the meeting be adjourned. All ayes, motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Robert I. Cecil, secretary



**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES** (renewable yearly): Fledgling (students) \$15, Goldfinch \$20, Bluebird \$35, Oriole \$50, Egret \$75, Osprey \$100, Bald Eagle \$250, and Peregrine Falcon \$500+. Additional family members, \$4 per person. Membership dues entitle members to receive *Iowa Bird Life* and *IOU News* quarterly and to vote and hold office in the Union. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Send subscriptions, membership payments, back issue requests, or address changes to David C. Edwards, 2308 State Avenue, Ames, IA 50014 (Dave@dandje.org).

**INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS:** Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other material relating to birds in Iowa should be sent in Word or WordPerfect to the editor. Research manuscripts will be sent for peer review. Submission of material should be by e-mail attachment or IBM-formatted 3.5" diskette; alternatively, by mail, typed or handwritten.

**Photos and graphics:** Submit photos and slides preferably as TIFF (\*.tif) images or as high resolution JPEG (\*.jpg) images in e-mail attachment, on 3.5" diskette or CD, or by mail. All photos, slides, and graphics will be returned.

Send all materials other than seasonal field reports to Kayleen A. Niyo at Kay@KayNiyo.com or by mail to 25100 Sunset Lane, Evergreen, CO 80439. Deadlines for submission are **January 1 for winter issue (Vol. 1)**, **April 1 for spring issue (2)**, **July 1 for summer issue (3)**, **October 1 for fall issue (4)**. Send seasonal field reports to field reports editors by deadlines listed on inside front cover.

**IOU NEWS:** Paul Hertzell, Editor, 1432 East State Street, Mason City, IA 50401 (phertzell@rconnect.com)

**IOU WEB SITE:** <<http://www.iowabirds.org>>, Ann Johnson, Webmaster. On-line resource for rare bird alerts, checklists, site guides, IOU information and membership. Support the IOU through purchases at the on-line IOU Nature Store.

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT:** Deadline for receipt of reports is 15 January. For forms and instructions, contact Christopher J. Caster, 4 South Ridge Ct., Coralville, IA 52241 (cjcaster@earthlink.net).

**IOWA BIRDLINE:** Danny Akers (warbler\_1231@hotmail.com)

**BIRD SIGHTINGS:** Post to [ia-bird@lists.iowabirds.org](mailto:ia-bird@lists.iowabirds.org). Subscribe at <<http://www.iowabirds.org/main/list-serve.asp>>

**ADDRESS CHANGES:** Send address changes/membership subscriptions to Registrar David C. Edwards, 2308 State Avenue, Ames, IA 50014 (Dave@dandje.org).

**UPCOMING MEETINGS OF THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION:** Spring 2005: 13–16 May 2005, Indianola, IA.

**DESIGN:** Lynn Ekblad, Ames, IA

**GRAPHICS:** Richard Beachler, Boone, IA



*Yellow-headed Blackbird at Long Pond, Guthrie Co., 12 June 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

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